Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

Maurice Levitas A Culture of Deprivation

Jean Davis, Joan Ramelson and Betty Rubinstein Social Work: A Communist View

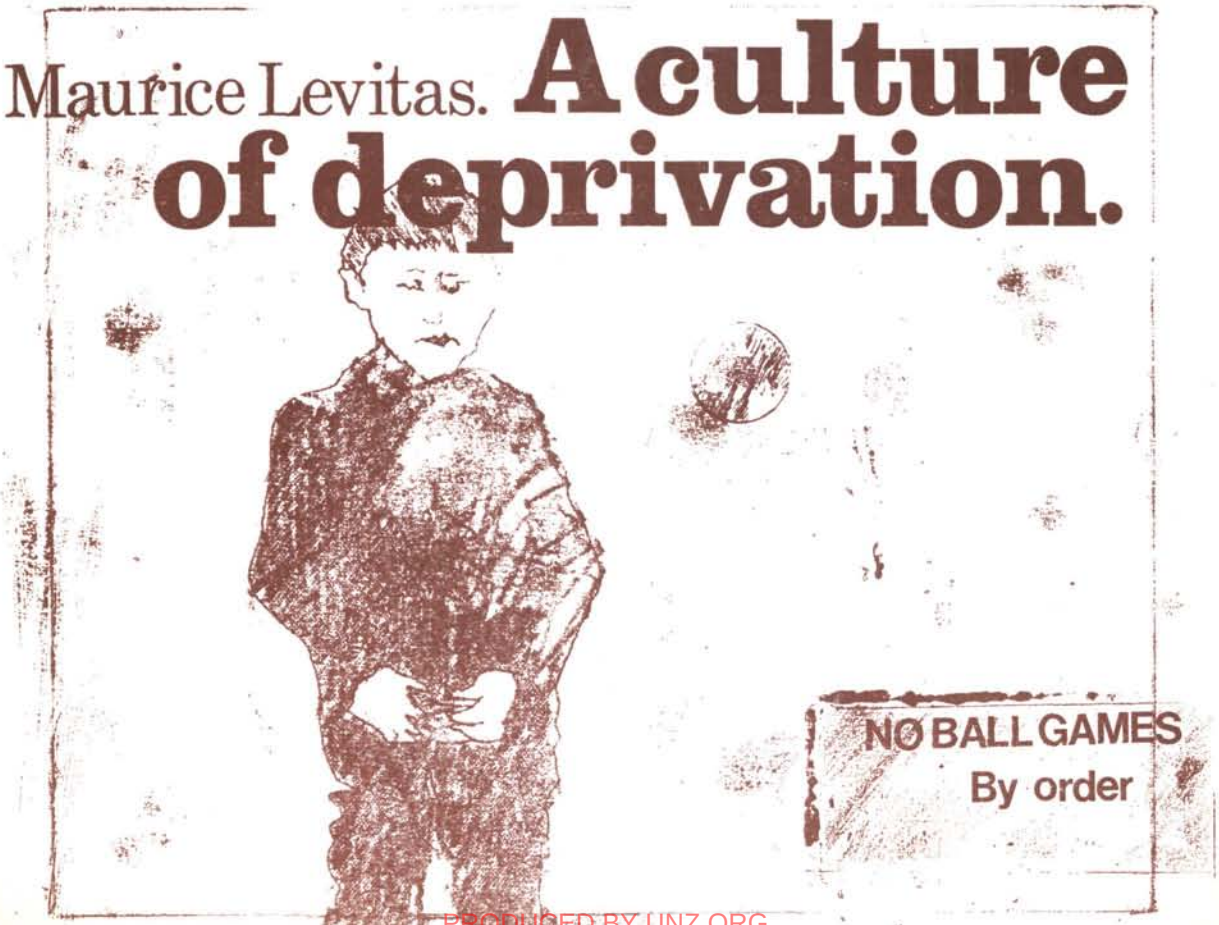
Fidel Castro Historical Analysis of the Cuban Revolution Part II

Discussion:

Roger Hallam *Marx and Modern Social Theory*

Dennis Ogden, Kenneth Brinson, Mike Prior *Socialist Democracy—Some Problems*

Maurice Levitas. A culture of deprivation.



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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 20, Number 4

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Editorial Comments

FIVE years ago the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union put forward a programme for Peace. Its principal purpose was to achieve a turn in international relations from cold war to the peaceful co-existence of states with different social systems, a turn from explosive tensions to detente.

The first part of Comrade L. I. Brezhnev's Report, opening the 25th Congress of the CPSU on February 24, was devoted to this central question of peace and in particular to the achievements of the past five years in this field:

> "Struggle to consolidate the principles of peaceful co-existence, to assume lasting peace, to reduce, and later also to eliminate, the danger of another world war was, and remains, the main element of our policy toward the capitalist states. It may be noted that considerable progress has been achieved in the area in the past five years.
>
> "The passage from cold war, from the explosive confrontation of the two worlds, to detente, was largely connected with changes in the correlation of world forces. But much effort was required for people—especially those responsible for the policy of states—to become accustomed to the thought that not brinkmanship, but negotiation of disputed questions, not confrontation, but peaceful co-operation is the natural state of things."

Facts have borne out, Brezhnev declared, the timeliness and realism of the Programme of Peace:

> "And though world peace is by no means guaranteed as yet, we have every reason to declare confidently that the improvement of the international climate is a convincing reason that lasting peace is not merely a good intention, but an entirely realistic objective. And we can and must continue to work tirelessly in the name of achieving it!"

DETENTE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Later in his Report Comrade Brezhnev discussed the surprise affected by a number of bourgeois leaders over the solidarity of the Soviet people and Soviet Communists with the struggle of other peoples for freedom and progress. Detente, he explained and peaceful co-existence relate to *inter-state relations*. They mean, essentially, that disputes and conflicts between countries should not be settled by war, by the use of threat and force:

> "Detente does not in the slightest abolish, and cannot abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle. None should expect that because of detente communists will reconcile themselves with capitalist exploitation or that monopolists will become followers of the revolution. On the other hand, strict observance of the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states and respect for their independence and sovereignty are one of the essential conditions of detente."

No secret is made, Brezhnev continued, of the fact that Communists see detente as the way to create more favourable conditions for peaceful socialist and communist construction. When we are rebuked for this we can hardly help thinking that those who rebuke us are not convinced that capitalism can survive without resort to aggression and threats of force, without encroaching on the independence and interests of other people:

> "As for the leftist assertions that peaceful co-existence is the next thing to 'helping capitalism' and 'freezing the socio-political status quo', our reply is this: every revolution is above all a natural result of the given society's internal development. What is more, life itself has refuted the inventions about the 'freezing of the status quo'. Suffice it to recall the far-reaching revolutionary changes in the world in recent years."

As we go to press the 25th Congress is still in session. We shall print in a forthcoming issue of *Marxism Today* further material on the Congress.

GEORGES MARCHAIS ON THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

We shall be publishing in a later issue extensive extracts from the Report of Georges Marchais to the 22nd Congress of the French Communist Party.

In the second section of this Report—"A Democratic Road to Socialism"—Marchais made some interesting comments on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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In the draft document under discussion, he said, it was explained that "only a political power representative of the working people will permit the carrying through of the radical transformation of economic and social life". But the phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat" did not figure in the document. Why was this?

> "If the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' does not figure in the draft document to describe political power in the socialist France for which we are fighting, it is because it does not present the reality of our policy, the reality of what we are proposing for our country.
>
> "What do we say in the draft document? We say this:
>
> "—The power that will guide the socialist transformation of society will be the power of the working class and of other categories of the working people, manual and intellectual, of town and country, that is to say the power of the great majority of people.
>
> "—This power will be constituted and will act on the basis of a choice freely expressed through universal suffrage and it will have the task of achieving the most complete democratisation of the economic, social and political life of our country.
>
> "—It will have the duty to respect and to secure respect for the democratic choice of the people."
>
> "Contrary to this, the word 'dictatorship' automatically evokes the fascist regimes of Hitler, Mussolini, Salazar and Franco, that is to say the very negation of democracy. That is not what we want.
>
> "As for the word 'proletariat' it evokes today the kernel, the heart of the working class. Whilst its role is essential, it does not represent the totality of the working class, still less of the whole working people, from which the socialist power that we envisage will emanate".

It is evident therefore, Georges Marchais continued, that we cannot define as "dictatorship of the proletariat" what we are proposing to our people. We base our position on the principles of scientific socialism elaborated by Marx, Engels and Lenin:

> "It is a question, in the first place, of the necessity for the working class to exercise a leading political role in the struggle for the socialist transformation of society.
>
> "Whilst the working people, the popular masses can today in struggle, gain certain urgent social measures, and even win certain new liberties, the real and durable satisfaction of their economic, social and political rights is totally impossible without a *change in the class nature of power*. The participation of the working people and of their representatives in the management of the affairs of our country, *their access to the leading positions of society constitutes the key problem of the struggle for socialism*. Within the working people, the working class is the largest, the most combative, the most experienced in the struggle for social progress—and it has to be emphasised—for the national interest. It must therefore have its rightful place within the socialist state and play a determining role in it."

In this connection, Comrade Marchais continued, the draft document indicates that "alone as a class, the working class can successfully lead the revolutionary struggle. Its vital interests, its numerical strength, its great concentration, its experience of class struggle and its organisation make it today and tomorrow the leading force of struggle for a new society. . . .". And secondly, Marchais explained, we have to see the necessity of the revolutionary struggle of the masses to defeat the manoeuvres of the big bourgeoisie:

> "The draft document in this connection underlines '. . . . the big exploiting bourgeoisie never willingly renounces its domination and privileges. It always tends to utilise every possible means to preserve or reconquer them.' I would add that this is particularly true of the French bourgeoisie. For, if a democratic tradition exists in our country, there also exists a Versailles tradition, and the conduct of those in power today recalls to us daily that it is not dead.
>
> "That is why the draft document shows that the working people, the popular masses must 'at every stage assemble their forces and carry out great activity to defeat reactionary manoeuvres . . . , to paralyse or defeat all attempts of reaction to have recourse to illegality, subversion and violence.'
>
> "When this is said, in the spirit of our document, we carefully take into account 'the real process', that is the conditions of our epoch and our country. These conditions permit and make it necessary for us to envisage for the advance to socialism in France other roads than those followed by peoples who have already achieved the socialist transformation of their countries.
>
> "In the conditions of Russia of 1917, and then of the young Soviet Union, the dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary to assure the success of the building of socialism. It is correct to say that, without it, the Soviet working class and peoples could neither have undertaken nor defended that work of liberation, which had no precedent, and which they achieved. That is why the Communist Parties when they were founded, drawing lessons from the bankruptcy of international social democracy and the victory of the October Revolution, correctly, in the conditions of that epoch, adopted that slogan."

(We have translated *class ouvriere* as working class, *travailleurs* as working people.)

THE CRIME OF THEORY

The controversy that has been going on in the *Times Literary Supplement* over Professor J. H. Hexter's attack on Christopher Hill (disguised as a "review" of his book *Change and Continuity in 17th Century England*) raises important questions about the use and nature of history, as well as about the limits

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which common decency should impose in polemic among scholars. Is it the job of the historian to accumulate masses of facts, or to try to understand the past, to see history as a unity and a process, uniting past to present? Professor Hexter, it seems, is of the first opinion. And, of course, no one denies that facts are essential: a house cannot be built without bricks, but the biggest pile of bricks in the world is still not a house. Hill is clearly of the second. His whole life has been spent in explaining what he believes really happened in one of the most crucial periods of our history, the Revolution of the seventeenth century. As the title of this book indicates he has sought the continuous change that exists within continuity, as well as the continuity which persists within the sharpest changes. Above all, perhaps, he has been concerned to explore in depth the relations between men's religious beliefs and their social and political thinking.

It is no wonder, then, that Professor Hexter has no hesitation in convicting him of the terrible crime of "advancing theories". He is, indeed, quite impenitent about it. As he writes in his very dignified and effective reply:

> "The historian's method is not dissimilar to that of the natural scientist. It involves collecting and classifying material, posing a hypothesis, testing it against all the evidence available, restating it in a form which others can test and then submitting it to the judgement of other workers in the field."

His whole work, indeed, has been an application of this method, to which he has brought a skill and erudition which for Professor Hexter is only an aggravation of his crime.

The Professor's method of controversy is, to say the least, peculiar. Clearly he has spent months brooding over the many books Hill has written during the past dozen years or so. But he does not, in any serious way, attack the general positions Hill has built up. Instead he has taken a single essay, "Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism", in which Hill has developed a closely reasoned argument to show that the protest and doctrine of justification by faith alone was in certain ways related to the development of a capitalist ethic. Professor Hexter makes no direct attempt to discuss the validity of this hypothesis. Instead, he selects a single paragraph and devotes almost a whole page of the *Times Literary Supplement* to a series of pettifogging, and in the main conspicuously ill-founded, criticisms of detail about the way Hill uses his sources.

From there he proceeds to a general attack, not only on Hill's historical judgement but on his professional integrity. He accuses him, in effect, of *starting* with a hypothesis and then selecting the evidence to support it. The implication is that any evidence which does not fit is suppressed. Hill is a "compulsive lumper", and the compulsive lumper fits his facts into pre-selected boxes and "somehow gets rid of anything or anyone that will not fit into the fore-ordained boxes." To anyone who knows Hill's work such an accusation is ludicrous. To anyone who knows Christopher Hill the man it is outrageous. Professor Hexter, one supposes, fancies himself as a Hammer of the Marxists, and to such a cold-warrior any methods may seem allowable.

FREEDOM IN ARMS

Lawrence & Wishart have now published an important new book by A. L. Morton, author of *A People's History of England*. It is about the Levellers in the English Revolution, and consists of a major essay on the Levellers, the part they played in the Revolution and their significance for us today, followed by a selection of 17 of the most important of the Levellers' pamphlets and manifestoes—six of them reproduced for the first time in three centuries. With the title "Freedom in Arms" this paperback makes readily available for today's readers the history and the original writings of one of the greatest English popular movements.[1]

In a Foreword, Christopher Hill, the Master of Baliol College, Oxford, writes: "The Levellers speak to us direct across three centuries". This is literally true—and their message comes through all the more clearly and insistently with the aid of A. L. Morton's Introduction.

The rank and file of the Cromwellian Army sought to carry the Revolution forward from the removal and execution of the King to full rights and freedoms for the common people. They were eventually suppressed and dispersed by the force and guile of the Cromwellian Grandees. But their message lives on. Not least among their achievements was that they were the first, in their opposition to Cromwell's reconquest of Ireland, to protest against an aggressive colonial war.

[1] A. L. Morton—*Freedom in Arms*, paperback, 350 pp., £1.00.

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A Culture of Deprivation

Maurice Levitas

(The author is at present Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Education at Neville's Cross College, Durham. He is a member of the District Committee of the North East Communist Party. His book —Marxist Perspectives in the Sociology of Education—*was published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1974.)*

Five reasons have finally induced me to submit this article for consideration by readers of *Marxism Today*. Most important is correspondence in the *Morning Star* compaining of low literacy levels acting as a barrier to proper participation on the part of some workers in trade union activity. Another is the opinion expressed by Communist teachers at a recent discussion that the views criticised below are being fostered strongly at courses for practising teachers. The third is the experience of a recent seminar at a Teachers' Centre confirming the growing influence of these ideas. Then there is their rejection—but without the support of a theoretical rebuttal—by the Bullock Report.[1] Last is the account in *The Times* (July 2, 1975) of a dispute at a junior school in Islington between teachers and managers. The allegation is that "left-wing teachers" object to teaching working-class children traditional skills such as writing.

The central idea under consideration is that teachers of working-class children should be concerned with what is most relevant to them, with a working-class way of life, with working-class culture in the anthropological sense of the word. The intention of this article is to examine ways in which that concept of "culture" is misused in a denial that deprivation can have any real meaning, and in an impoverishment of the education of working-class children.

The Notion of "Culture"

The notion expressed in "culture" is that in any society its members will experience regularly recurring problems. And the solutions worked out to meet them will be just as regularly practised. New recruits to society learn what to expect, and learn to act "successfully". This includes ways of dealing with the natural universe and with social action. Continuity of the culture is thereby assured. A culture will, therefore, in the ordinary way outlast any of its practitioners.

The continuously high frequency of some solutions to regularly recurring problems makes it possible to map a culture provided that due regard is paid to its working arrangements, its beliefs, its kinship system, exchange activities, justice, government, war, art and so on. When this is done it is perceived that the different aspects of the culture, taken together, fit each other. Anthropological evidence shows a rich variety of patterns of culture.

The range of variation indicates that attempts to understand society—or even a given social institution—by reference to "human nature" must be reversed. A particular activity in a given culture—economic, marital, educational, political—can be radically different from a similar class of activity in another culture. So different that it would be extremely difficult for any one person to practise both. Yet any child could be brought up (socialised) to believe that either of these mutually exclusive behaviours is the only "natural" one. Men, women and children, therefore, cannot be understood without reference to the societies in which they live.

Culture and Education

The importance of the culture concept for education can be readily grasped. It points to a source of explanations for human behaviour. It fosters the conviction among educationists that the norms and customs of his group are crucially important to the shaping of an individual's personality. Since culture is socially transmitted (is not biologically inherited) it emphasises the human capacity to learn and promotes an optimistic view with regard to educability. From this standpoint changed circumstances produce changed men. The suppositions, for example, of the Norwood Report (1943)—that children fall into three identifiable groups, fortuitously matching the English tripartite secondary school system at that time—are, obviously, invalid.

And yet the concept of culture is being used currently to promote a reactionary educational practice. In face of the reluctance of the ruling class to provide the institutions necessary for a well-educated population, theoreticians in the sociology of education are evolving a "cultural" justification for differentiated schools and curricula. This is accompanied by an aggressive posture against "the middle class"—especially against teachers—in "defence" of the poor.

[1] *Bullock Report: A Language for Life*, DES 1975, p. 54

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The substance of the new ideology attacks the notion of cultural deprivation. And it is perhaps most succinctly expounded—certainly most widely publicised—in the introduction by Nell Keddie to a collection of essays called *Tinker, Tailor . . . the Myth of Cultural Deprivation.*[2]

A study of William Labov and of Herbert Ginsburg,[3] whose work precedes Keddie's, shows that theirs is an attack upon deficit explanations of poor educational attainment, where the deficit is held to be unalterably grounded in the genetic or cultural make-up of the child. Labov says: ". . . the deficit theory does not focus upon the interaction of the negro child with white society so much as his failure to interact with his mother at home."[4] Similarly, Keddie declares that the idea of cultural deprivation arises from: (i) "a focus upon the child (in research) rather than on the whole educational situation"; (ii) a preoccupation with explanations concerning why the performance at school of poorer children is lower than their measures of intelligence; (iii) a tradition which explains differences in educational attainment in terms of social class and ethnic group.

But to equate "deficit" with deprivation is to do damage to the English language. "To deprive" is a transitive verb whose meaning involves action by a subject carried over to an object. To be deprived does not mean to be inherently deficient (any more than to be head-shaved means to be bald) except for those who refuse to see or to say that there exists in society a group purpose, held as a legitimate right, to deprive (to take and to withhold from) negroes, poor whites and others in America, or from workers in Britain, what they would otherwise possess.

To face the fact that deprivation is an active social process carried on by a dominant social class against the rest of society would make Labov, Keddie and Co. face the educational implications of capitalism. Instead, Labov deals with the "wider interaction" by an examination of what goes on between child and teacher, and Keddie concentrates "on the whole educational situation" by examining the interactional situation in the classroom. The whole educational situation, however, reflects: capitalism as a system of society—as a culture; the current state of struggle between society's contending classes—culture in the process of change; the more ultimate aspirations of the contending classes—the direction of cultural change.

[2] Penguin Education Series, 1973

[3] *The Myth of the Deprived Child*, Prentice Hall, 1972

[4] *Tinker, Tailor . . .*, p. 24

Relativist View of Culture

Keddie is unable to think in this way—dialectically—because she has a relativist view of culture. Relativism is a pattern of ideas and beliefs with four major aspects. First, cultures are seen as completed wholes. The fact that there are some dominant tendencies (laws) in any ensemble of social relations obliterates for the relativist two other facts: that they were not always dominant and that their dominance is challenged. Second, cultures are seen as not translatable in terms of one another. So one culture cannot be better or worse than another—only different. Hence there can be no criteria of social (or educational) progress. Third, knowledge and logic are held to be purely social phenomena. Fourth, complex societies are seen to comprise a diversity of cultures—quite distinct, separate, parallel modes of interaction. Complementarity and/or antagonism are lost sight of.

It is this relativism which allows Keddie to ask her key question: "Of what culture can these (poor) families and their children be deprived since no group can be deprived of its own culture (?)." But this is a *trick* question. The trick is to construe "cultural deprivation" as the *impossible condition* where typical groups are deprived *of* a culture (i.e. are excluded from social norms of any kind) when it is more meaningfully construed as the *actual condition* where typical groups are deprived *within* a culture (i.e. are normatively denied powers and resources available to others). The accusation that certain groups are denied a cultural identity provokes the idolisation of that identity. The oppressed are thus brought to yearn for their oppression, to see a kind of richness in their poverty, and beauty where there is ugliness. But in fact what is positive in their real culture is their struggle for power and resources—a process of destroying their old culture.

The trick is facilitated by an absence of any attempt to define "culture", and this in turn makes it possible to exclude working relationships and the material bases of the quality of life. Explanations for educational under-achievement such as that given by the Plowden Report (which looked at the outcome of slum childhood) are scorned. Never mind all that, says Keddie in effect, teachers should see children "culturally", that is "as children who are already participants in a way of life albeit different from our own". The operative word here is "different". Life for a child in the slums is not worse than life elsewhere as long as we call it a *way of life.*

Language and Speech

Keddie postulates (like so many others) two main cultures in Britain: working class and middle

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class. Each has a particular quality of speech with a "situated elusive complex of meanings" which "cannot be reduced to positive quantitative validation". But measurement is not the same thing as reduction. Besides, Labov, whose work is enlisted to support her views, does validate quantitatively when he makes poor-negro Larry's speech superior to that of middle-class-negro Charles. Labov is especially concerned to prove by measurement against a yardstick of cognitive and conceptual potency that Negro Non-standard English is as good as Standard English.[5]

That is said to be Labov's limitation. His strength is said to reside in his insistence on the "socially contexted meaning of speech". But this is a distortion. Labov says that his evidence "means that the social situation is the most powerful determinant of verbal behaviour and that an adult must enter into the right social relation with a child if he wants to find out what a child can do".[6] Keddie's "socially contexted meaning of speech" is quite different conceptually from Labov's "social situation". The former makes communication between different strata impossible; the latter presupposes the existence of common meanings.

What Labov shares with Keddie is a promise "to demonstrate the fallacies of the verbal-deprivation theory".[7] But he does not do this at all. What he succeeds in showing is that linguists hold the opinion that Negro Non-standard English, like any other dialect, is "a separate sub-system" in which every level of conceptual thought is possible. This is quite true. There is a Durham miner on the NE Communist Party District Committee whose discussions on the socio-economic forces and strategies at work—always in the Felling vernacular—are very profitable to listen to. And there are more like him. There are several points to make here: these people are very well informed; the considerable amount of reading they do is not in their vernaculars; when they formulate and amend resolutions they use Standard English to the accompaniment of dialect speech; they find no difficulty in translating from sub-system to Standard English and back again; they engage for long periods in conference with speakers of a variety of dialects expecting to understand and to be understood.

It remains a fact, however, that there are other speakers of the dialect—far too many—who, as a consequence of the poverty of educational provision over generations (a facet of class exploitation) find themselves with limited literacy and a poor vocabulary outside a restricted field of interaction. To deny that this is verbal deprivation is to condone it.

Deprivation and Social Class

In contradistinction to the extreme relativists, Labov insists that Negro children have the same logic and the same language (albeit a variant of it) as other children. He is concerned that they should learn, among other things, to read. His fear is that compensatory education policies designed to make up deficiencies stemming from home circumstances —when they fail—will provide renewed ideological strength to earlier intelligence testing deficit theory.[8] But there is strength in this argument only if deprivation is seen to be spontaneously generated in poor families. Set in the wider context of class exploitation such failure can be understood quite differently. Indeed, any attempts to reduce educational under-achievement, where they are not linked with overall struggle against capitalism, carry the same risks.

The proof of this is in G. H. Bantock's welcome[9] for Keddie's prescriptions as an "acceptable conclusion". He can accept "the principle of differentiation implied in Miss Keddie's analysis" because an alleged multi-cultural society without deprivation justifies it. His sarcastic taunt: "Once early environment is overcome class equalisation will take place and achievement will be evenly spread," depends upon the assumption that social classes generate themselves but not each other and that class struggle is an irrelevant issue. His invitation to individual competition for social mobility becomes the only hope when working-class aspiration to universal secondary education is ignored. Bantock's use of "culture" is different from Keddie's when he says: ". . . our present working class seem to have developed no appreciable indigenous culture". This makes blindness towards the unions, the co-operatives, the political parties easier. But the institutions created in the course of working-class struggle to limit and end deprivation cannot properly be excluded from an account of the total way of life known as capitalist society. And if this complex of institutions is not "appreciable", what is?

The direction chosen by Bantock—and by the relativists for different reasons—is a blind alley. Its rationale will not do even for capitalism. The development of the forces of production in modern industrial society must presuppose what Bantock seeks to ridicule: ". . . a neglected 'pool of ability'

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-42
[6] p. 33
[7] p. 71
[8] pp. 56-60
[9] Professor Bantock's article appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement*, October 5, 1973

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of almost limitless depth." The pressure of technological change ineluctably compels an expansion of higher education, which cannot happen where the pool of ability is limited. True, expansion goes against the grain of capitalist social relationships —especially during a recession. But this is a perfectly ordinary case (in Marxist terms) of relations of production acting as a fetter upon forces of production.

Keddie, Labov and Estelle Fuchs[10] are determined to prove that the concept of social deprivation evokes wrong attitudes from teachers. They claim that because teachers believe that differences in educational achievement match differences in social class they also believe that poor children cannot learn. So Fuchs uses the account of one typical young teacher to prove that "the slum school gradually instils, even in the best-intentioned teacher, the prevailing idea that in the slum it is the child and the family who fail but never the school". Now it is quite true that this idea is not absent from the evidence displayed. Nevertheless, only researchers set upon proving this can read the evidence without coming to the following conclusions: (i) the teacher concerned believes in her own capacity to teach and in the capacity of the children to learn; (ii) she believes that other teachers believe the same; (iii) she is critical of the conditions in which her work has to be done; (iv) she lays the blame for failure outside the school—not in the children's homes—but with those who command allocation of resources for the school.

The edge of her criticism is in fact turned against educational deprivation actively perpetrated by the "board of education". That Fuchs in the first place, and Keddie at second hand, can reduce the importance of this evidence illustrates the effect of their attack on the concept of cultural deprivation: the capitalist state administration of education is left unscathed, the teacher is told to shoulder the blame.

Plea for Illiteracy

One should not imagine from this that teachers are being urged by the relativists to work harder and better to raise, for example, standards of literacy. On the contrary, two essayists, Postman[11] and Meade, are summoned to plead for illiteracy. A poor level of literacy is, plainly, a characteristic of some very poor families. That is, it is part of their culture. It is, therefore, purely middle-class bias to insist that their children learn to read!

Postman even "proves" that the teaching of reading is counter-revolutionary. From this and from Meade's adulation of the absence of educational compulsion in pre-literate societies we are encouraged to believe that an attack on compulsory schooling is in some way a revolutionary doctrine. It is the reverse which is true. Compulsory education was a demand of organised workers in the 1860s. For example, the Geneva Congress of the International Workingmen's Association, 1867, demanded mental, bodily and technological education and recognised that "there exists no other method of doing so than through general laws enforced by the power of the state".[12] Karl Marx, who drafted that resolution, treated with heavy irony the idea that children are given over to the mercy of capitalism when they go to school:

> "(Workers) must not even exert themselves in order legally to prohibit the employment of children under ten because by such means they do not bring to an end the exploitation of children over ten: they thus commit a new compromise, which stains the purity of eternal principles.
>
> "Workers should even less desire that, as happens in the US, the state whose budget is swollen by what is taken from the working class should be obliged to give primary education to workers' children; for primary education is not complete education. It is better that working men and working women should not be able to read or write or do sums than that they should receive education from a teacher in a school run by the state. It is far better that ignorance and a working day of sixteen hours should debase the working class than that eternal principles should be violated."[13]

We should note too that Marx considered the schoolteacher to be the promoter in Europe of the educational welfare of the worker and peasant.[14]

Theory of Knowledge

Perhaps the ideas of the relativists most dangerous for education are those pertaining to the theory of knowledge. Knowledge, according to Keddie, is not "out there" to be mastered; it is something to be "experienced". The "nature of knowledge" is "socially constructed and situated". Here Keddie faithfully follows M. F. D. Young, who writes in the same vein:

> "Once the meanings associated with 'science' and 'technology' and 'pure' and 'applied' are seen as socially determined, not only does it become possible to explore how these social meanings

[10] Estelle Fuchs in *Tinker, Tailor . . .*, pp. 75-85
[11] Postman, *ibid.*, pp. 86-95
[12] *The First International and After*, Pelican, p. 85
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 328
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 209-10, 214-16, 252, 255, 327

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become part of the school context of pupil preference, but a sociological enquiry into the *intellectual content* of what counts as science becomes possible." (M. L.'s emphasis.)[15]

It should be understood that Young is not just insisting that social forces define what aspects of nature are to be investigated, the manner of doing so, and the organisation and reproduction of the knowledge obtained. He is declaring that there exist different worlds of knowledge (like different cultures) and that these justify different curricula for different children. He therefore accuses those who are opposed to special syllabi for allegedly low-ability children of having "an absolutist conception of a set of distinct forms of knowledge" which ". . . are *no more than* the socio-historical constructs of a particular time".[16] (M. L.'s emphasis.)

The position is not a new one—though its particular use, ideological support for class-differentiated education programmes, probably is. According to Lenin it was formulated as follows by Bogdanov:

> "The basis of objectivity must lie in the *collective* experience. We term those data of experience objective which have the same vital meaning for us and for other people, those data upon which we construct our activities without contradiction, but upon which, we are convinced, other people also must base themselves in order to avoid contradiction. . . . In general the physical world is socially co-ordinated, socially harmonised, in a word, *socially organised experience*."[17]

This is something like determining what the world is like by a majority vote. Only for Young and Keddie minority votes are also "true" and teachers must comply accordingly. Lenin's criticisms of this view are that the objectivity of the physical world is something independent of men's understanding of it and that if it were true followers of religion, being in a majority, would thereby prove scientists to be wrong.

It is well known that Marx and Engels looked upon *production* as the embodiment of men's active understanding of and union with nature. At first:

> ". . . the identity of man and nature is so apparent that the limited attitude of men towards nature conditions their limited attitude to one another and their limited attitude to one another conditions their limited attitude towards nature. . . ."[18]

For our own time however:

> "Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs. . . . These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of human will over nature, or of participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand: the power of knowledge, objectified."[19]

We can see, therefore, that when Young and Keddie make "forms of knowledge" *only* "socio-historical products" they turn society into a celestial or infernal social entity (dependent upon one's experience of it) constrained in no way by the laws of nature.

Keddie's concept of "experience" leaves out that which is experienced. The notion that "experience" should be made to take the place of "knowledge out there" to be advanced, accumulated, mastered, was polemised against exhaustively by Lenin. Materialism holds that our knowledge relates to a universe, a "thing-in-itself", "out there", beyond our knowledge except in so far as we know anything about it. Lenin writes:

> "In the theory of knowledge, as in every other branch of science, we must think dialectically, that is, we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how knowledge emerges from ignorance, how incomplete, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact."[20]

Knowledge and Labour

In the sociology of education it is important to stress: that knowledge is related to labour—to the ways in which members of a given culture are physically maintained; that at different levels of social development there is more knowledge or less; that mastery by the rising generation of what knowledge there is is necessary to further accumulation; that language is a mode of organising, acquiring, preserving, accumulating and communicating knowledge; that the development of writing (and reading) was an enormous extension of speech in these respects; that literacy of any individual governs his access to, and his capacity to acquire knowledge. Further, the investigation of a particular society requires examination of how the social and technical divisions of labour

15 *Knowledge and Control*, Ed. M. F. D. Young, p. 21

16 *Ibid.*, p. 23

17 *Selected Works* (in 12 volumes), Lenin, Vol. 11, p. 187

18 *Marx and Engels on Religion*, p. 75

19 *Grundrisse*, Pelican, p. 706

20 *Selected Works* (in 12 volumes), Lenin, Vol 11, p. 167

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realise and use the knowledge at the disposal of its members. Capitalism's primary characteristic, for example, is that it has a *labour market*—i.e. it has buyers and sellers of labour. As abstract labour, sellers demand and buyers offer a price for labour-time; as concrete labour, buyers demand and sellers offer the objectification of particular knowledge and skills (their transformation into things).

Education is, as yet, largely about the acquisition of knowledge incorporated in concrete labour. Access to knowledge can be direct or may require enabling skills such as literacy and numeracy. The influence of a *labour market,* however, is to grade the kinds of concrete labour in accordance with the buyers' requirements. And since educational arrangements reproduce labour-cost accounting and the social dominance of the capitalist, access to knowledge tends also to be graded accordingly. Differential access was institutionalised in the tripartite secondary school system. It currently manifests itself in differentiated curricula as well as in the considerable remains of tripartitism. In sum, curriculum practice in capitalist society tends to ration knowledge in accordance with the labour requirements of the exploiting class.

It will be seen that relativist idolisation of slum "cultures" fits very well into such an educational order. When Neil Postman says "the insistence on literacy is peculiar to the school situation and not to the life worlds of the learners" and when Keddie makes this the special strength of his paper, they effectively provide ideological support not so much for the status quo as for educational regression. What they propose, in substance, is the provision of a labour force of illiterate workers, extremely difficult to organise, prey to racist and reactionary propaganda, acquiescent in their own social subjection.

Logic

What applies to knowledge applies also to logic. There are regularities in nature whether men understand them or not. And there is always *some* degree of correspondence between how humans understand what they understand and those regularities. Without such correspondence physical survival of the individual members of any society would not be possible. And without progressive development of such understanding there could be no development of the means of production. Modes of thought, socially conditioned, make it more or less difficult for people to understand their worlds and to act effectively. But since thought and action can be more or less effective, two things follow: (i) that one culture may be equipped with better knowledge and logic than another; (ii) that the criteria of judgment imply an "out there" absolute. Lenin had this to say about it:

> "The distinction between subjectivism . . . and dialectics . . . is that in (objective) dialectics the difference between the relative and the absolute is itself relative. For objective dialectics there is an absolute *within* the relative. For subjectivism and sophistry the relative is only relative and excludes the absolute."[21]

And with regard to thought processes:

> "The recognition of necessity in nature and the derivation from it of necessity in thought is materialism."[22]

If the laws of thought were simply "culture bound", altogether "socially situated", it would be impossible for members of pre-industrial societies, and of certain social groups, to understand modern science—especially modern social science (Marxism, for example). And this is plainly not the case. But if we were to agree that this is the case, then we should be establishing reasons for not attempting to teach physics, chemistry, mathematics, and so on, to certain classes of children. We should therefore be falling into an acceptance of the class-differentiated educational structure required by the hirers and firers of labour.

In another place[23] Keddie shows that she is aware of this. "The origins of these categories (i.e. categories of ability and knowledge expressed in streaming) are likely to lie outside the school and within the structure of society itself. . . ." But this awareness stops short there—does not lead on to challenging that structure. Her next sentence reads: "It seems likely, *therefore* (!), that innovation in schools will not be of a very radical kind *unless the categories teachers use . . . undergo a fundamental change.*" (M. L.'s emphasis and exclamation.) Nor does she challenge the categories: unstreaming and undifferentiated curricula are rejected as "panaceas".

Of course it is correct to say that "streaming is itself a response to an organising notion of differential ability". But it is a profound methodological error to write as though notions exist outside the heads of teachers and educational administrators. Given two other convictions: (i) that the vast majority of children are capable of dealing with advanced knowledge and skills of different sorts; (ii) that capitalist class power should be challenged in the educational structure as elsewhere—there is no reason why destreaming coupled with collective (as well as other) techniques in teaching should not bring about radical

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 167
[22] *Ibid*, p. 227
[23] *Knowledge and Control,* pp. 133-161

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changes in the schools and service the general direction of class struggle.

Leicestershire Examples

It is worth while to give an example of such an approach to the practice of social studies teaching in two Leicestershire schools, as outlined by Margaret Nandy[24] (whose political standpoint I do not know). Here the question of "relevance", since it implicitly rejects relativist ideology, is easily defined: ". . . we want to *impart knowledge* not for its own sake, but to contribute to the formation of a rational viewpoint in our pupils; but our objective is *thwarted by the personal involvement* of the pupils, their tenacious predisposition to a viewpoint they have already acquired by non-rational means. It is in the general context of social-science teaching that I see education for a multi-racial society, and race relation goals formed only a part of the project we devised." (My emphases—M. L.)

Determination of the type of course was guided by considerations that it should "provide analytical tools . . . essential (for) a coherent picture of society as a whole", that it should give the pupils "a comparative perspective". It took into account that: "The pupil starts with a hazy knowledge of the subject but is unwilling to accept that his knowledge is incomplete. . . ." Courses rejected are criticised because "they provide no training in the logic of forming a point of view after looking at the facts . . .".

Nandy finds the inculcation of rational decision-making very important for "teachers attempting to improve race relations" because "appeals to group loyalty are frequently made to justify racial discrimination". She sees what Keddie does not see: that "material drawn from the children's own society and time . . . is too emotionally charged to be examined with detachment, too complex to exhibit patterns readily, too familiar to ask fundamental questions about". So she uses anthropological material, historical material, animal organisation—"out there" knowledge about "out there" societies—"to enable children to grasp some of the basic aspects of human life—its social character, the abilities unique to man, the fact that there is a logic to all patterns of human development".

Geography and history text-books are criticised, not because they give "out there knowledge", but because they provide chauvinistic, incomplete, inaccurate representations of what is "out there". For example, with regard to Africa: "Our problem was to get beyond pity to respect for the persons. We tried to do this by virtually re-writing all the material to stress the culture of Africa, the reasons within African society which allowed enslavement to take place, its effect on Africa. And we put much more stress on African liberation movements and slave rebellions than is usually the case."

If educational effort can be an element of struggle against capitalism, then the virtue of this kind of curriculum innovation is that it breaks out of the parochial restraints that so-called "élitism" and relativism alike would perpetuate for teachers and pupils. An international science-technology accompanied by world trade in which a capitalist-world market is still a major power constitutes a basis for eroding intellectual ghettos. In this connection it is of particular interest to educationists that Marx and Engels insisted that ". . . the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections" and that only with the abolition of the power of the capitalist world market "will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and *be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth*".[25] (M. L.'s emphasis.)

"Reification"

It is, of course, this direction which is embodied in the movement to institutionalise unstreamed comprehensive education and which is hindered by relativist attacks upon "definitions of knowledge that are institutionalised or reified . . . in our school curricula and their relation to what is counted as non-school or common-sense experiential knowledge".[26]

A concern for the implications of "reification" takes issue with the manner of its use by Keddie. The word was used by Max Weber[27] to warn against inadmissible transformation (in the sociologist's mind) of a collectivity or process into a thing or into a person that could feel, think, or act. Marx criticised the same error more than once.[28] Coulson and Riddell point out that "personification of a society, or of a collectivity, or of a process, can become a substitute for having to think out the real nature of a problem".[29] How-

[24] *In the Multi-Racial School*, Ed. McNeal and Rogers, Penguin, 1971

[25] *The German Ideology*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1938

[26] *Tinker, Tailor . . .*, p. 91

[27] *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, Max Weber, Free Press, pp. 101-4

[28] *The German Ideology*, pp. 38, 42; *Poverty of Philosophy*, International Publishers, p. 98

[29] *Approaching Sociology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 17-18

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ever, no teacher thinks of the curriculum as a person. Most think of it, quite correctly, as a balance of selections from the current state of human knowledge which children should be engaged in learning. And this balance is under continuous review by practising teachers.

But because "reification" means turning (in the mind) a social process into a thing, it appears to some sociologists that social processes must not be seen as having to do with things. This is just not tenable. The most important areas of human interaction are in the making and distribution of things. But it is characteristic of relativist discussions on schools that relations of production have no place. Accordingly, there are families, neighbourhoods, and schools but no factories, mines or workshops. This is what makes it possible to think of a two-class system with no capitalists: working class (manual), and middle class (like teachers!).

We started by showing that relativism is an outcome of the culture concept. But it is not a necessary outcome. Exclusion of forces and relations of production can be regarded as illegitimate. The principle of accumulation and development can be allowed. What are referred to by relativists as "cultures" in Britain can be more properly labelled as "culture patterns" or "sub-cultures" or "culture traits". Taken together these orientations render unnecessary the invention of the concept "mainstream culture" flowing between and nearer to one sub-culture or another. Capitalist society can then be understood as constituting, in sum, a typical culture with characteristic processes of deprivation: rent, interest and profit.

The Marxist Approach

Nevertheless, the Marxian materialist conception of history is a far superior orientation. For here relativism is given no room to grow. First, "history" emphasises the impermanence of every culture or condition of society. Second, "materialist conception" in looking for explanations concerning a way of life in man's mode of producing and reproducing his livelihood, points to the accumulations and development of knowledge and technique as major impulsions for social change. The materialist conception of history applied to relations of production in Britain also forbids the working-class/middle-class dichotomy. And for the same reason as the Donovan Report on industrial relations could not operate without classifying "Employers and Proprietors". For relations in industry—as objective truths, as social facts—impose a logic which must image their social facticity. But the phrase "worker and capitalist" is a truer image because "to employ" or/and "to own" do not portray in their entirety the relationships of production under capitalism. For it is within this process that "the worker produces himself as labour capacity as well as the capital confronting him, while at the same time the capitalist produces himself as capital as well as the living labour confronting him".

Who deprives whom is at this point clearly understood. The main area of the exploitative relationship may be understood as a continuous recurrence of moments of alienation: (i) the workers' product (realised labour) becomes alien property; (ii) this then meets the worker as capitalist property functioning as capital; (iii) workers, organised compulsorily for production, are therefore alien to each other; (iv) as a working force they act in response to "an alien will and an alien intelligence"; (v) their working combination is experienced as the imposition of the plant; (vi) the plant "objectifies the scientific idea" and in the process is alienated from the scientist who conceived it; (vii) the worker therefore "exists as an animated punctuation mark (of the productive process), as its living isolated accessory".[30]

Two points should be made about this. First, the crucial issue over which the working class fights its battles is that of material exploitation. The organisation and class-consciousness required for effective pursuit of working-class interests in terms of wages and social services embody processes which counteract alienation. And, when members of the working class address themselves to problems and policies concerned with winning political power, alienation is even more fundamentally undermined. Second, it should not be imagined that those, like teachers, whose livelihood depends upon the sale of non-manual labour-power, escape exploitation. Thus when they act in defence of their own interests and of those of the working class in general, in the short and the long runs, they implicitly counteract, at the same time, processes of alienation.

What is important, therefore, is that teachers should see themselves as a section of the working class (not as members of a 'middle class'), that they should be aware of educational modes of exploitation, that they should wish to substitute socialism for capitalism, that they should struggle against attacks on educational provision. With regard to teaching as a practical activity this involves ending the deception that working people and their children are inherently intellectually impotent. It also involves refusal to engage in a conspiracy to persuade them that their status quo is something to be cherished and honoured.

[30] *Grundrisse*, p. 308

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Social Work: A Communist View

Jean Davis, Joan Ramelson and Betty Rubinstein

The Communist social worker is regarded by some as a contradiction in terms, attacked from the right for wanting to overturn "the system" and from the far left for conniving at the perpetuation of "the system". The present writers feel that the argument about the role of social work and the social worker in our society has been stuck for too long at an inconclusive and unsatisfactory stage; we also feel that Communist social workers should not be driven on to the defensive, as they have too often, in our experience, tended to be. We want therefore to try to look at some of the issues involved in this argument, in the hope of stimulating discussion that might lead to greater clarification and understanding, and contribute to the formulation of policy on social work questions which is needed in the Communist and labour movement.

The Starting Point

We take the attitude that any consideration of the role of social work in Britain today must start from the existence of actual social need in our society. In particular, we recognise that the present economic crisis bears heavily on some of the most vulnerable sections of the population, on old people, single-parent families, young children, the sick and disabled: on all those, in short, who have typically provided the bulk of the day-to-day demand for personal social services. (We are of course only too aware of the need for critical examination of the whole "cycle of deprivation" concept, but we hope that this might be the subject of further debate arising out of this introductory article.) It is true that the problems of all these sections cannot be attributed to the present crisis, but they are certainly exacerbated by it. It is also true that the worsening conditions of life produced by the acute crisis of capitalism increase demands for help from the social services from people who might not be among the traditional "clientele" of the social worker, as the effects of mass unemployment, low incomes in an inflationary situation, and the housing shortage are felt among more and more of the working population.

Let us not, however, lose sight of the fact that since the end of war, in particular, important legislation has been passed which has produced a network of health and personal social services more advanced and comprehensive than in some other developed capitalist countries; examples are the National Health Service Act of 1948, the Mental Health Act of 1959, the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970. All such advances in social legislation represent a gain for the working people of this country, often only won after long periods of concern and struggle. The most serious aspect of the present situation as far as social work is concerned is that even the partial gains thus made are being eroded and are in danger of being wiped out.

It is all very well to define problems, but as social workers who are Communists, we see the only possible solutions in terms of political change and the eventual transformation of society. On the other hand, to say that social problems will be solved under Socialism, and only under Socialism, simply begs the question. *The needs of people exist in the here and now, and have to be met in the here and now to the extent that this is possible under existing circumstances.* The old and the young, the sick and the handicapped, cannot wait for better days before anything is done to help them.

Short-term and Long-term Aims

It should be clear that we do not subscribe to the view that poses the immediate satisfaction of needs against the achievement of long-term aims. We believe that this is as false in relation to social and personal need as it is in relation to the fight for wages. Furthermore, we categorically reject the infantile notion that the more deprived and oppressed people are, the more likely they are to revolt against capitalist society.

We would go on from this to pose another proposition: in the period of transition from capitalist to Communist society, interpersonal and intra-personal problems will persist. There will still be physical and mental illness and handicap, bereavement, difficulties in relation to children, and so on. This may be stating the obvious, but we do so in order to dissociate ourselves from the crude "determinist" approach which sees the elimination of all problems of human living in the aftermath of a Socialist transformation of the political and economic structure of society.

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In underlining the fact that people will continue to need help with social and personal problems, we are not arguing about the particular forms which this help might take; although whatever agencies and organs might be involved, we envisage that help will be provided increasingly in and by the community.

But this means that in the period of transformation, as in the whole period of struggle directed towards decisive political change, the capacity to deal with problems of human living must be developed and this capacity in turn depends on knowledge of human development and functioning. In a Socialist society there is a continuing need for research and the evolution of theory in this vast field of knowledge. (In this context we strongly oppose any view that poses individual psychology against social psychology, as nothing would be less consistent with a Marxist approach.)

In a word, we see our area of concern as man and his functioning in society, and the role of the social worker above all in relation to this area. We challenge anyone to suggest that this is not a legitimate field in which Communists should work.

Good Practice

Our object in putting forward such self-evident propositions is not to defend the present state of social work in this country any more than to advocate its abolition. We are concerned in this as in any other field of work with good practice, and in our view far more thought needs to be given by social workers who are Communists to what constitutes good practice. We can however safely state that ideas of good practice are in sharp contradiction to the actual conditions in which the social services are functioning at the present time. The personal social services are being distorted into crisis services, a "fire brigade" to deal with social emergencies such as homelessness, family breakdown, the ill-treatment of women or children, and so on. This fact, above all, lays us open to the accusation that social workers spend their time "papering over the cracks", or, more commonly, even failing to perform this makeshift sort of repair. The same accusation may, of course, be levelled with as much (or as little) justification at teaching or medicine.

There is a lot of discussion in the social work literature about professional aims and standards of practice, but what we are currently experiencing is the frustration of professional aims. The social worker concerned with the quality of the service he is providing is not even able to do what he is capable of doing, very often, and the possibility of preventive social work may be almost non-existent.

In actual terms, the framework of social work practice is, of course, the administering of social services to the individual, family or wider group. This means that the social worker is concerned with a wide range of statutory and other obligations arising from social legislation and carries considerable responsibility for operating this legislation. For example, the enactment of the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act laid upon local authorities a statutory responsibility to ascertain and provide for the needs of all people in the categories defined in their area. In practice, this means an enormous workload for the social work teams which can only be partially and often inadequately dealt with under present conditions. (The fact should not be overlooked that many voluntary organisations are involved in this field, among other social work fields, and without their work the local authorities would be even less able to meet their obligations.)

We have dwelt on this example in order to counter the impression that social workers are only concerned with individual cases. In fact, attempting to provide for such needs as those of the disabled and chronic sick must involve the building up of resources in the local community and the development of residential as well as domiciliary services; this is also true where old people, children, the mentally ill and handicapped and other sections of people in need are concerned. So even under present conditions, social workers are developing—and being obliged to develop—methods of work which are not only alternatives to traditional individual casework, but often more relevant to actual needs, such as work with groups of people, community organisations, etc. Social workers are increasingly involved with bodies in the community such as tenants' associations, and this fact is having an impact on thinking among social workers themselves. Good practice, therefore, is increasingly being seen to depend on the evolution of different methods of work embodying the basic values of social responsibility and respect for the person.

"Propping up the System?"

It may still be argued by those who take a more "left" position that working in the personal social services means "propping up the system"; according to this view, the services were brought into existence by a capitalist ruling class in order to prevent social unrest. We regard this view as a mistaken one, based on a mechanistic approach. In the first place, as already mentioned, it underestimates the actual benefits that the working people of this country have derived from the fight over a long period of time for better social services. And, secondly, it is wrong to see social work as operating simply in a bureaucratic context. The actual experience of many social workers to date

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(and not exclusively the young and "radical") has led them towards an appreciation of the importance of the collective ability of people to organise themselves in their own interests and gain more control over their own affairs.

To summarise this very sketchy treatment of the subject, we want to contrast the old notions of the social worker as, at best, a "do-gooder", or, at worst, a "propper-up of the rotten system" which lingers on in the labour movement, including the Communist Party. We think it is time that the labour movement became more aware of the fact that social workers themselves are increasingly coming into the fight against cuts in the health and social services and in defence of jobs; and that this involvement is based on their own experience and their own interests, as well as on their understanding of the needs and interests of all those who use the social services.

Document:

A Historical Analysis of the Cuban Revolution (Part II)

Fidel Castro

(We print below, slightly abbreviated, Part II of the first section of the speech made by Fidel Castro, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, on December 17, 1975, at the First Congress of the Party, held at the Karl Marx Theatre, Havana.

The Attack on Marcada

Even though this was not the way of thinking of all those who had embarked upon the road of revolutionary armed struggle in our country, it was that of its main leaders. In general, there was a mixture of patriotic, democratic and progressive feelings among the members in its ranks, of true political purity, dedication and disinterestedness, as only the workers are capable of experiencing. They were all mainly from poor families and had a powerful awareness or instinct for political and social liberation. The few who did not come from poor families had acquired their political formation from studies, from vocation and revolutionary sensitivity. But even that formulation of the new leaders would have to go through the experience of revolutionary life itself in order to gain depth in practising what, in theory, they already held as firm political convictions.

From all this originated the new revolutionary process. But in the young combatants who emerged, in contrast to what unfortunately very often happens in other countries, there was a deep respect and admiration for the old Communists, who, during heroic and difficult years, had struggled for social change and had held aloft with unyielding firmness the noble banners of Marxism-Leninism. In most cases, they were their intellectual teachers, they were an inspiration and example to them in the struggle. Even in the bourgeois environment of the University and other youth circles, Mella and Martínez Villena were universally admired, and the Communists, due to their dedication, integrity and devotion to the cause, were deeply respected. That is a great lesson of our Revolution, which is not taken into account by many abroad who are, nevertheless, sensitive to its purity and historical magnitude. History must be respected and recounted exactly as it occurred.

The attack on the Moncada Garrison did not mean the triumph of the Revolution at that time, but it did show the way and outlined a national liberation programme, which would open the doors of socialism for our homeland. Not always are tactical setbacks in history a synonym of defeat. As those who had organised the attack themselves have said, victory in 1953 might have been much too early to counter the disadvantages of the world balance of forces at that time. Yankee imperialism was extremely powerful, and, if the Revolution had been forced to choose between surrender or destruction, it would have undoubtedly preferred to perish rather than surrender. But the course of history in any country has to face these imponderable and at times tragic alternatives.

What is important in paving the way to the future, in certain circumstances, is the indomitable will to fight and revolutionary action itself. Without the Moncada there would not have been the *Granma*, there would have been no struggle in the Sierra Maestra and no extraordinary victory

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of January 1, 1959. Likewise, without the epic struggle of 1868 and 1895, Cuba would not be independent and the first socialist country in America, but would most likely be just another state of hateful Yankee imperialism. National feeling would have been frustrated for ever, and we would not even be speaking Spanish in our beautiful land. The independent, revolutionary and socialist homeland of today is founded on the blood and sacrifice of its sons.

Five years, five months and five days after the attack on the Moncada, the Revolution in Cuba triumphed. A very impressive record, if it is taken into consideration that its leaders were kept for almost two years in prison, remained more than 18 months in exile, and spent 25 months at war. In the course of those years, the world balance of forces had changed sufficiently for the Cuban Revolution to survive. . . .

The Revolution never stopped in the face of set-backs. The Moncada and Alegría do Pio, two bitter defeats, did not impede the further course of the struggle. The struggle was resumed in the Sierra Maestra with seven weapons. Within two years the tyranny's army, supposedly invincible, had been wiped out and the victorious people were in possession of the 80,000 rifles once pointed at the nation. The war itself was an encouraging example of what a people's tenacity and revolutionary will could achieve. The revolutionary armed combatants, during the final stage of the struggle, numbered just over 3,000 men. The arms were seized from the enemy in combat. In our last war for independence there were no supplies from abroad either. Our workers and peasants, organised in the Rebel Army, with the support of the middle classes, overthrew the tyranny, destroyed the military machine and achieved the full independence of the homeland. The working class, with its revolutionary general strike, made a decisive contribution to the final battle. This brilliant feat of our Revolution is, as a fact, almost unknown abroad. In an anecdotal and sporadic manner something has been published about it, but its systematic and documental history is still to be written.

January 1, 1959

All the eleventh-hour manoeuvres by imperialism—military coup, provisional government, etc.—were thwarted. Imperialism had now to cope with a Latin-American nation without a repressive army and with an armed people. This was the significance of January 1, 1959. Ninety-two years after the Cry of La Demajagua, Cuba was finally the master of its future, and the banners of the heroic dead fluttered victoriously in our homeland.

This was not only the work of the 26th of July Movement. The Marxist-Leninist Party, which had brought together the best of our working class, paid a high price in blood sacrificing the lives of many of its sons. The Revolutionary Directorate combatants have to their credit a great many heroic episodes, like the Presidential Palace attack on March 13, 1957, and took an active part in the insurrectional struggle. Our glorious Communist Party emerged later from these origins. . . .

First Revolutionary Measures

One of the first measures of the Revolution was to mete out exemplary punishment to the chief culprits responsible for the crimes committed by Batista's tyranny. The torturers and murderers, the executers of innumerable compatriots throughout our history had never been brought to account for their actions. This elementary act of justice, unanimously demanded by our people, sparked off a fierce campaign in the imperialist press against the Revolution. However, dozens of criminals, responsible for the assassination of thousands of Cubans, found refuge and received shelter and asylum in the United States.

Similarly, all the wealth plundered by the officials of the bloody régime was immediately confiscated. This also happened for the first time in our history.

The old army, which had cruelly oppressed the people, was totally disbanded, and this function was assumed by the Armed Forces of the glorious Rebel Army, which, as Camilo said, "was the people in uniform".

Public administration was purged of the elements that had been accomplices of the tyranny.

Embezzlement of public funds, sinecures and the shady practice of receiving pay without doing any work were immediately eradicated.

Political parties which had served the oppression were dissolved.

The corrupt and sell-out leadership of the trade unions was swept away and the rights of the working people were re-established.

Workers dismissed during the tyranny were reinstated in their jobs. Evictions of peasants ceased immediately.

On March 3, 1959, the decision was taken to intervene in the Cuban Telephone Company, a Yankee monopoly which had been involved with the tyranny in dirty dealings against the people's interests.

On March 6, a law was enacted to reduce the onerous burden of rents paid by the people by as much as 50 per cent. This measure aroused great enthusiasm among the urban population and came as a real shock to the bourgeoisie.

On April 21, all beaches in the country were declared open for public use, eliminating the

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exclusiveness and the hateful discrimination practised by the bourgeoisie in many of the centres.

On May 17, the first Agrarian Reform Law was enacted. This resolute, necessary and just step confronted us directly not only with the national oligarchy but also with imperialism, since many US enterprises owned sizeable tracts of the most fertile land in the country, mainly planted to sugar-cane. Although the established 30 *caballerías,* equivalent to 402 hectares, limit was still relatively high, there were US enterprises owning as much as 17,000 *caballerías,* i.e. 227,000 hectares, in relation to which the law was profoundly radical. . . .

Economic Aggression

When the United States realised that the Revolution would neither retreat nor yield to its pressures, it began to carry out a series of economic acts of aggression, while recruiting mercenaries and training them for sabotage and military actions. In our case, the economic aggressions whetted the appetites of the corrupt oligarchies that governed in Latin America. For almost a century a market had been created in the United States for our sugar. We had been that country's supplier since the colonial period. During the World Wars, the US people were assured a steady supply of Cuban sugar at low prices. Furthermore, it was the only item of our economy with a certain development on which the bare subsistence of millions of Cubans depended, because the workers hardly enjoyed the fruits of their labour, since the lion's share invariably went to the bourgeois oligarchs and foreign monopolists, both in the period of slavery and, later, under wage labour. . . .

At the heart of it all was sugar and other sordid material interests, camouflaged with anti-Communist attitudes and postures adopted by the strumpets disguised as vestal virgins. Consequently, the Cuban sugar quota was criminally cut off and divided up among other countries. This, in itself, would have sufficed to strangle any nation's economy.

But these were not the only resources of the United States. The majority of our scarce industrial centres were equipped with that country's machinery: the electric power industry, the oil refineries, the mines, the textile mills, the food industry, etc.; the same could be said about other mechanical means of production and transport.

The United States totally cut off its exports of spare parts to Cuba, not only from its domestic industry, but also from its numerous subsidiaries all over the world. This blow would also have been crushing to any economy.

The third criminal blow in the economic field was the cutting off of fuel deliveries. They had been the suppliers of this basic product through their monopoly enterprises, which controlled virtually all of the world's supply and owned the refineries in Cuba.

To all these measures was finally added the ban on any trade with our country, including foodstuffs and medicines. These supplies had always arrived mainly from the United States, due to the trade imposed upon us at the beginning of the century. There were not even any wholesale warehouses in Cuba. They were mainly in that country where orders were placed at short notice. In addition to this there was the fact that most of the economies of the western countries were dependent on the United States and the measures of the economic blockade were complied with, not only by the Yankee subsidiaries, but also by the governments of those countries.

No Latin-American people ever sustained such brutal blows to its means of subsistence.

But US aggression was by no means confined to the economic field. The doors of that country, which had once been open to a very small group of citizens, were now thrown wide open to anyone wishing to leave Cuba. Landowners, bourgeois, cheap politicians, henchmen, pimps, vice peddlers and even lumpen proletarians took advantage of the opportunity. One of the main objectives of that policy, apart from the cynical campaigns against the Revolution, disguised as ridiculous humanitarianism and the recruiting of mercenaries for future aggression, was to deprive the country of its professionals and technicians, many of whom had been at the service of the bourgeoisie, obviously had a petty-bourgeois mentality and were afraid of the revolutionary changes. In this way, they wrested from the country thousands of doctors, a great many engineers, architects, professors, teachers, laboratory and various other kinds of technicians. This act of plunder even included skilled personnel from industries and important production centres, some of whom had enjoyed the privileges of the so-called aristocracy of labour.

It was the last annexationist movement staged by the reactionary classes in Cuba, except that in this case, upon fulfilling their dreams, it was themselves and not the homeland that they annexed to the empire. . . .

Armed Intervention

And if all these efforts failed, imperialism planned counter-revolutionary and armed violence as the final blow. It organised and supplied economic resources and equipment to numerous counter-revolutionary armed bandits who operated in the Escambray mountains, through pseudo-revolutionary elements, former agents of the tyranny and enemies of every stripe. Trying to imitate the

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counter-revolutionary actions of the aristocracy and reactionary clergy in France after 1789, imperialism sought to create in the Escambray a sort of Vendée against the Revolution, in spite of the fact that the majority of the peasants and agricultural workers in the region were firmly allied with the people's cause. These armed groups were later organised in every province, including that of Havana. The United States openly supplied them by air and sea. They committed numerous and abominable crimes against our teachers, students involved in the Literacy Campaign, militant revolutionaries, workers, peasants and administrators of the people's economy. The struggle against these groups led to the loss of numerous sons of the people, and cost our economy hundreds of millions of pesos.

In the cities, sabotage against production centres led our working people to shed their precious blood.

Simultaneously, the mercenary expedition to Playa Girón was organised. Guatemala and other Latin-American countries impudently lent their territories for the preparation of aggressive acts. The aircraft that attacked our air bases at dawn on April 15, 1961, bore the emblems of our Air Force. Afterwards, several of them landed on US territory, while the US delegate at the United Nations cynically claimed that those were Cuban planes whose pilots had rebelled against the régime. Two days later, a mercenary force, equipped with the most modern weapons, landed at the Bay of Pigs to invade the country. The obvious objective was to occupy part of Cuba's territory, set up a provisional government and request the OAS, that is to say, the United States, to intervene.

Our people's crushing response defeated the mercenary army in less than 72 hours and frustrated the carefully elaborated plans of the CIA and the Pentagon.

The October 1962 Crisis

Militarily, there was but one alternative for the United States: direct invasion of Cuba. To do in our country what they later did in Vietnam. The firm conviction that Yankee imperialism would, at some time and on some pretext, launch its military forces in a direct attack on Cuba, and our belief that the measures proposed to prevent this would strengthen the whole socialist camp, were behind our decision to sign the Cuban-Soviet Agreement on setting up nuclear arms on our territory, which later brought about the October Crisis.

The United States would not resign itself to our country's sovereign right to decide on its international relations and adopt the pertinent measures for its defence. This posed a grave threat to world peace. Fortunately for mankind, war was averted. But the US government had the chance to ascertain that its preposterous, abusive and adventurous aggression against a small and unflinching country might lead to disaster and that the growing strength and solidarity of the revolutionary camp was an insurmountable obstacle to its imperial omnipotence. As part of the solution, it was forced to commit itself not to invade Cuba. At that time, it was hard for Cubans to understand that formula for what it was worth; today, after 13 years, we find objectively that the October 1962 Crisis meant a victory for the revolutionary camp. The USSR is now even mightier, the balance of forces has changed considerably in favour of the revolutionary forces, and the United States could not avoid fulfilling its commitment.

The victory consisted in preserving peace at one of the most dangerous moments without sacrificing fundamental political objectives, in view of the terrible alternative of war. The apparent success of imperialism has burst like a bubble. Following that chilling test, even the cold war began to falter.

Later, however, the US government established military bases in Central America and Florida for pirate attacks on our coast, many of which were carried out as last blows by wounded but impotent imperialist pride. The consequent US compromise in Vietnam and the heroic resistance of that sister people ended in the gradual scaling down of military actions against Cuba, and our people began to enjoy a period of relative peace.

For those who wonder how it is possible that Cuba, 90 miles away from the United States, has escaped a devastating war such as that in Vietnam from a distance of 20,000 kilometres, a thorough explanation is provided by the aforementioned facts.

In general outline: US imperialism thought that the war of liberation was simply an internal problem, that Batista's army, with the help of the Yankee advisers, would crush the fighters. It never even then suspected their revolutionary potentialities. When it plotted to replace Batista and prevent a revolutionary victory, believing there was plenty of time, the sweeping offensive of the Rebel Army late in 1958 took it by surprise.

On January 1, 1959, there was already no mercenary army in Cuba. Diplomatic offensives, political pressures and the brutal economic aggression which came afterwards also failed, as did subversion, armed counter-revolutionary bands and the Playa Girón attack. The invasion was crushed before the OAS had time to intervene, and the armed bands were put down, as was also, lastly, the obvious intention to invade Cuba in the October Crisis, with the resulting commitment not to carry out a direct military attack against our homeland.

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Each of the drastic steps which imperialism took or tried to take were too late, and in every case there was an underestimation of the Cuban people, their capacity to resist and their combat spirit.

In this way, our people, with their firmness and heroic determination, supported by international revolutionary solidarity, freed themselves from the danger which would have cost the lives of millions of Cuba's sons and boundless material destruction.

It should be added that for many years the Central Intelligence Agency organised dozens of attempts on the lives of the leaders of the Cuban Revolution. The most sophisticated weapons, such as poisons capable of killing off the population of whole cities; guns fitted with silencers and microscopic poisoned bullets, leaving virtually no trace on the skin; fountain pens equipped with tiny needles, which could be used without the victim's awareness to innoculate terrible toxic products with delaying effect and killing without the possibility of diagnosis of the cause of death, were within the CIA's arsenal of resources for these purposes, apart from the rifles with telescopic sights, bazookas, recoilless guns, machine guns, explosives and other more conventional means, which, on so many occasions, they supplied to their agents to carry out the attempted murders.

Marcada Programme Fulfilled

Well-known Mafia members were also recruited for these purposes. Today part of this horrid page of official terrorism has become known through a US Senate committee's own confession. Never before in the history of international relations have such practices, which in this case were carried out by a powerful and modern state against the leaders of another country, been so systematised. This fact is, in itself, of unique significance. Nevertheless, not a single voice has been raised in the OAS concert to denounce such criminal practices, and that was the infamous institution which, by declaring Marxism-Leninism to be incompatible with the system, expelled us from its ranks and, invoking subversion, years later condemned us to brutal economic blockade measures and political isolation.

The security organisms of the revolutionary state, with the efficient assistance of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and of the entire people, smashed these plans of the CIA, and this was undoubtedly yet another brilliant victory for the Revolution.

Our people forcefully repelled each aggression by imperialism. On October 26, 1959, the National Revolutionary Militia was formed.

On March 5, 1960, the slogan of "Patria o Muerte" (Homeland or Death) was first proclaimed at the funeral of the martyrs of *La Coubre*.

On May 8 of that same year, diplomatic relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were re-eastablished.

On August 6, the oil refineries, the electricity and telephone enterprises and 36 sugar mills, all US-owned, were nationalised.

On September 2, the First Declaration of Havana was adopted.

On September 28, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution were set up at a mass rally to the echoes of counter-revolutionary bomb explosions.

On October 13 of that same year, all banks and 383 big economic enterprises were nationalised.

A day later, on October 14, the Urban Reform Law was enacted.

Essentially, the Moncada Programme had been fulfilled, and the Cuban Revolution reached its socialist stage, in the midst of an epoch-making anti-imperialist struggle.

When, in April 1961, the planes bombed our airports and the mercenaries invaded Girón, 100,000 young Cubans and tens of thousands of teachers were in the countryside carrying out the Literacy Campaign in the most gigantic effort of its kind ever undertaken by any country. Within only one year, Cuba became the nation with the lowest illiteracy rate in Latin America. The Cuban people were able to wage simultaneous battles in various fields. Here arms in hand, there books in hand, others in their work centres and factories, those who remained fulfilled the production quotas of those who had gone off to the front. The sugar crop was also being harvested in April. None of the basic activities was paralysed.

The state, the Armed Forces and the mass organisations did not have their present level of development and organisation. Revolutionary organisations had not yet merged into one party, but among the leadership of the 26th of July Movement, the People's Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Directorate there was close cooperation, contacts were frequent and fundamental decisions were supported by everyone. Since no process like this ever develops idyllically, there were at times contradictions, but the spirit of unity, the sense of historical responsibility and the common objectives always prevailed over sectarian attitudes, which, in one way or another, affected all of us. . . .

The Socialist Stage

For this reason, on April 16, 1961, with raised rifles and clenched fists at the burial of the victims of the mercenary bombing, just before entering into confrontation with the invaders, the working people were able to proclaim with heroic determination the socialist nature of our Revolution.

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By then, foreign monopolies, landowners and the national bourgeoisie had been expropriated and our working class had lost the only thing it had had: its chains. This revolutionary working class, allied with the peasantry and the rest of the poorest sections of the people, was to become the undisputed vanguard of this process.

The conditions were present to organise all the revolutionaries in a single party. A process of integration at the grass-roots and direction levels had already started, but, after the definitive statement of April 16 and the glorious Girón victory our Party, in fact, originated from the close unity of all the revolutionaries and working people, based on the heroism of our working class, that fought and generously shed its blood in defence of the homeland and socialism. From then on, we were to act as a single organisation and under a united leadership. The brilliant ideas of Martí and Lenin on the necessity of a single party to lead the revolution were more than ever present. The Party's ideology could not be that of liberal or bourgeois thought, but that of the revolutionary social class that history itself had placed at the head of mankind's struggle for liberation: that of the working class, Marxism-Leninism, which Baliño and Mella had already courageously upheld in 1925.

This ideology was historically linked with the aspirations of the heroic *mambises* who had shed so much blood for the independence of Cuba and the equality and dignity of their compatriots. Yankee imperialism was now the enemy of the nation, and modern slaveholders—foreign monopolies, landowners and the bourgeoisie—were its social enemy. This ideology linked the national struggle with the world revolutionary movement, an indispensable condition for the national and social liberation of our people. The construction of the Marxist-Leninist Party, which now leads the Revolution and guarantees its continuity, is one of our people's greatest feats in this historic period. The Central Committee and the Political Bureau of the Party were officially constituted on October 1, 1965.

International Solidarity

We have been speaking about the merits of our people, but it is impossible to do so without emphasising the outstanding role played by international solidarity. Without the resolute, firm and generous help of the Soviet people, our country could not have survived the confrontation with imperialism. They bought our sugar when our market was brutally cut off by the United States; they provided us with raw materials and fuel that we would have been unable to purchase anywhere else; they gave us, free of charge, the weapons with which we fought the mercenaries at Girón and equipped our Revolutionary Armed Forces, so as to make any direct aggression from the United States as costly as possible; they gave extraordinary support to our economy in the critical years of the economic blockade. Thousands upon thousands of Soviet military specialists and technicians helped to train our armed forces or supported virtually every branch of our economy with their assistance. The Soviet people's effort was followed by other socialist countries to the extent of their possibilities.

The debt of gratitude to the glorious Party of the Soviet Union and its heroic people will always be in our hearts. In the solidarity extended to Cuba, a country located thousands of miles away from the USSR, were realised the internationalist visions of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and the invincible force of the immortal October Revolution made itself felt in the destiny of this continent. . . .

Our confidence in Lenin's homeland is unbounded because, in the course of more than half a century, the Soviet Revolution has proved its adherence to the principles and consistent line of behaviour in its international policy. It has shown this not only in Cuba but also in Vietnam, in the Middle East, in the Portuguese colonies fighting for their independence, in Chile, Cyprus, Yemen, Angola and every other part of the world where the national liberation movement confronts colonialism and imperialism, as it once did in an exemplary manner with the heroic Spanish people.

This incontestable truth has not been denied by a single exception, and in the long run any slanderous attempt to deny history's objective facts will be useless. The USSR has also made a decisive contribution to world peace, without which, in this epoch of growing scarcity of raw materials and fuel, the imperialist powers would have launched upon a new and voracious partition of the world. The mere existence of the powerful Soviet State makes this alternative impossible. Its detractors are set upon denying this, like dogs barking at the moon.

Construction of Socialism

The Cuban Revolution continued its inexorable course. The means of production gradually became the property of society. On October 3, 1963, a new Agrarian Reform Law was enacted establishing the maximum limit of land tenure at 67 hectares. Farms exceeding that size were nationalised. At the same time, all the farmers were promised that there would be no new agrarian laws, so that any further advance towards higher ways of farming could only be accomplished with the consent of the producers.

About 70 per cent of the land remained in the

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hands of the nation as the common property of all the people, that develops and exploits it for the exclusive benefit of society as a whole. In this sense our country took a stride forward of exceptional importance. This was an imperative necessity due to the fact that Cuba basically depends on agricultural surpluses for its exports and development.

In March 1968 a revolutionary offensive was carried out as a result of which a large number of small enterprises passed into the hands of the nation. Such a measure was not necessarily a question of principles in the construction of socialism at this stage, but the result of the specific situation of our country in the conditions of the harsh economic blockade imposed by imperialism and the need to make the utmost use of the human and financial resources, to which was added the negative political activity of a stratum of urban capitalists who hindered the process. This, of course, does not release the Revolution from the responsibilities and consequences of an inefficient administration of resources, which went to aggravate the financial situation and the manpower shortage.

Peasants' plots, covering some 30 per cent of the land, and a small part of the vehicles which kept on operating as the personal property of those exploiting them directly, were the only remaining forms of private ownership.

In the 1965-70 period, the nation concentrated its main efforts on reaching a 10-million-ton sugar-cane harvest by the final phase of that period. This policy was outlined due to an imperative need. Our population was growing and consumption increasing; this, together with the country's economic development, demanded important increases in exports. The effort was exceptional and was justified, both from the moral and practical points of view. It was necessary also, somehow, to compensate for the lack of a trade balance with the Soviet Union, which was a basic duty to the people so generously helping us. This endeavour was one of the most noble and enthusiastic undertaken by our people in this period of the construction of socialism. Nevertheless, it could not be achieved. Industrial investments were not yet yielding fruit. Great imbalances in the rest of the economy were caused by the pressing problem of the labour force required in ever-growing quantities for the sugar-cane harvests, in circumstances in which the mechanisation of the harvest was being delayed for technical reasons.

There were also shortcomings in organisation, and inadequate direction and economic management methods. Reality proved to be more powerful than our intentions. It was necessary to rectify this situation and give up the achievement of this objective for some years. This, however, could not have been possible without the understanding of the Soviet people, who accepted reduced quantities of sugar during 1972-74; who did not diminish the growing deliveries of raw materials, food, fuel and equipment to Cuba; and who also raised the prices of our exports, thereby improving the terms of trade. . . .

During the revolutionary period the country has made notable advances in many fields. The merit of this progress lies in the fact that while the United States, a powerful country with vast military, economic and political resources, has done everything possible to strangle the Revolution and to re-establish its corrupt, exploitative and opprobrious system, our people have not only resisted and emerged victorious, but have accomplished, in these difficult conditions, magnificent deeds.

MARXISM TODAY

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Discussion Contributions on:

Marx and Modern Social Theory

Roger Hallam

The publication in *Marxism Today* (December 1975) of a review article by Alan Hunt on Swingewood's *Marx and Modern Social Theory*[1] suggests the appearance of a major new intervention in Marxist theory. The tone of Hunt's review, critical but in general laudatory, and his ascription to Swingewood's book of some important features, tend to bear out this impression. Moreover, Hunt makes clear what he takes to be the precise significance of Swingewood's contribution, namely, "the way in which the nature of Marx's social theory is discussed in terms of the most important trends in the historical development of sociology" (this is "what is most important about the book"); and Hunt thinks it an additional merit that Swingewood "presents some of the most important debates within Marxist study in a manner that avoids the worst theorising of some of those currently locked in struggle, in ever more inaccessible language" (this constitutes the book's "wider value").

A moment's reflection, however, should serve to raise a doubt about this account of Swingewood's leading virtues. To take the latter point first, freedom from esoteric terminology is not of itself a recommendation, unless nothing is thereby sacrificed, and one wonders what would become of *Capital* if Hunt's criterion were generally to be applied, or, indeed, what would become of any form of scientific activity. Second, and more important, however, is the suggestion that Swingewood discusses "Marx's social theory . . . in terms of the most important trends in the historical development of sociology". For not only would such a procedure be the reverse of scientific, but we have also in fairness to record that Swingewood does not do it!

On the contrary, whenever he discusses sociological theory he strives to do so "in terms of" what he takes to be a Marxist point of view. Beyond this, however, the mere fact that a work discusses a particular issue does nothing in particular to recommend it. The mere *fact* that Swingewood's book treats of the relationship between Marxist theory and sociological theory does not distinguish it from a good many other texts, some of which Swingewood himself discusses in detail. Indeed, the most recent major contribution of this type, namely Giddens's *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, taken together with the same author's *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, has achieved something of the status of a textbook for undergraduate students of sociology; and, it might be added, Giddens *does* discuss Marx "in terms of" sociological concepts.

Swingewood's Idealism

It is therefore evident that Hunt's real case for *Marx and Modern Social Theory* has to be sought elsewhere than in the above-quoted summary points; and indeed it is not far to seek. Having outlined Swingewood's subject-matter, and having commented on its scope, Hunt writes that—

> "the greatest difficulty with [such an undertaking] is that it is not possible to embark on it without entering into the debate and discussion *within Marxism*, about what are the distinctive and most central features of Marxist social theory" (p. 376).

Now it is the position adopted by Swingewood "within Marxism" which Hunt seems to find most attractive: "the heart of Swingewood's discussion is to be found in his discussion of Marxist theory itself" (p. 376). Hunt examines in some detail "two features" which are for Swingewood "central to Marx's social theory" (p. 377). These are, first, the notion of Marxism "as method" in opposition to "tendencies which focus upon Marxism as a set of "social laws" (*ibid*) and, second, the concept of "praxis" as the other "distinguishing feature of Marx's social theory" (*ibid*).

The first question that arises is as to the status of a conception of Marxism such as is attributed to Swingewood by Hunt. It will not do simply to adopt, as Hunt seems to, the view that almost *any* serious discussion of Marx by anyone who claims to be a Marxist is to be welcomed as part of a "renewed endeavour to re-establish the central core of Marxist theory" (p. 377). For it by no means

[1] Alan Swingewood—*Marx and Modern Social Theory*, Macmillan, 1975.

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follows from the trivial fact that "it is today less possible for any individual, group or party to claim a monopoly of the truth in the interpretation of Marx", that "openness" (to use Hunt's word) in theory is an absolute virtue. Taken beyond a certain point "openness" becomes first eclecticism, then vacuity. There may be no *monopoly* of truth, but a good deal is perfectly clear, clear enough to warrant sharp criticism of theoretical positions which delight in demonstrating their contempt for the objective laws which Marx, with all due caution as to the "modifications" with which they operate in reality, derives and expounds in *Capital*; criticism, that is, of theoretical positions which effectively substitute for a grasp of the necessities of the capitalist mode of production an idealist orientation to the subjectivity of the working class, the political consequences of which are well known.

The second question that arises is whether Hunt is correct in his assessment of Swingewood's position; and there is no doubt that Swingewood's book *can* be read as putting forward the view that Hunt ascribes to it. It is certainly true, for example, that Swingewood denounces what he understands as "mechanical and deterministic" formulations of the dialectic; but we must be clear as to what this involves. In the first place, Swingewood rejects the dialectics of nature:

> "the dialectic is not motion external to man's actions but involves man both objectively and subjectively for it is only through men that social change occurs at all" (p. 31).

Along with the dialectics of nature is banished Engels, and with him materialism as well:

> "To affirm a reality independent of men, as Engels does, is to invoke a metaphysical concept of matter as external and absolute" (p. 28).

These two remarks alone are sufficient to establish that Swingewood's 'dialectic' is wholly *internal* to consciousness, in other words idealist. From this standpoint the only possible formulation of the specificity of the Marxist dialectic is that enunciated with incomparable preciosity by Merleau-Ponty: "As it becomes material, the dialectic must grow heavy"![2] Hence we have a conception of Marxism which is both hostile to the notion of "social laws" and receptive to the notion of praxis as de-materialised human action, as thought impeded only by its own alienation from itself. The real obstacle to revolutionary praxis, to the word made flesh, is the dominance of bourgeois ideas within the proletariat and its organs and agencies. For this reason Swingewood has to hang a good deal on the pegs of Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" and a voluntaristic theory of working-class consciousness of his own:

> "The most conscious representatives of a dominant class believe they rule not in the interests of a minority but for the whole society; to become aware of their class role as exploiters of labour power would lead quickly to political demoralisation. The social function of ideology is to prevent such processes from occurring" (pp. 181-82).

And again Swingewood writes that for Marx social order is to be explained by 'superstructural elements':

> "Bourgeois ideology is all-pervasive, hegemonic; within capitalism the working class remains a subordinate class incapable of totally negating bourgeois influences on its thought, culture and action" (p. 185).

Hunt sums up:

> "The most general feature of bourgeois sociology, usually explicitly reacting against the alleged 'determinism' of Marxism, has been to emphasise [the] subjective quality of social action, as being made up of conscious, purposeful action of individuals.[3] The main thrust of Swingewood's argument is that this concern with the subjective dimension of social action is not alien to Marxism" (pp. 377-78).

Perhaps this aspect of Swingewood's book, the aspect registered by Hunt's review, can best be summarised as an attempt to idealise Marxism, to constitute it as a method for the analysis of social formations as the totalised concretisation of ideas and of change as the deconcretisation of these ideas and their replacement by a revolutionary concrete totality based upon revolutionary ideas, the process being of course brought about by the praxis of the proletariat, free of any "metaphysical" material reality independent of itself. In his critique of functionalist theory, Swingewood can find no point on which it falls further short of

[2] *Adventures of the Dialectic*, p. 33.

[3] Hunt not only gives the impression that Weberian subjectivism constitutes "the most general feature of bourgeois sociology", but also suggests that this position, formulated in reaction to a "mechanical interpretation" of Marxism, is largely in conformity with Marxist theory correctly understood. This view (i) ignores the dominance of Durkheimian positivism in bourgeois sociology, and (ii) forgets the neo-Kantian basis of Weber's sociology and hence its commitment not only to an idealist but ultimately to an anti-rationalist view of history.

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Marxism than in its lack of a notion of "ideas as class consciousness, as ideology which strives to change the world" (p. 215).

Theoretical Contradictions

Let us call this reading of Swingewood's book reading A. The trouble with reading A is that it is radically at odds with an alternative reading. Reading B can be brought out by examining Swingewood's remarks on crises. He repeatedly states that Marxism is *not* a determinism; nothing in Marx's theory implies an inevitable transition from capitalism to socialism 'behind the backs' of the organised proletariat, and the role of consciousness is thus clear: it must make the leap of praxis. From this one might derive the impression that the long-run tendencies of the capitalist mode of production are non-existent or, shall we say, "immaterial". Hence Swingewood has:

> "Marx was not an economic determinist: his social theory, with its emphasis on ideology and alienation, clearly focuses on 'superstructural' elements for explaining social order" (p. 185),

and also, one therefore presumes, for explaining revolutionary disorder. Against this, however, we must note the fact that having set the stage for praxis Swingewood suddenly announces that the author of the play is 'the Economy' and that the players speak parts evidently assigned to them by economic "laws":

> ". . . the crucial element in Marx's analysis of crises is his apparent support for the functionalist model of society as a moving equilibrium. The similarity is merely superficial. Of course, he argues that capitalist crises become more and more catastrophic, but this *in itself* is insufficient to produce socialist revolution: capitalism does not collapse spontaneously and inevitably through the workings of its internal contradictions, but only through the class-conscious actions of the organised proletariat" (pp. 193-94).

How, it might be asked, does this stand in relation to:

> "Perhaps the most important point is Marx's emphasis on man as the creator of the social world, who is then trapped by ideology, alienation and reification, processes against which he nevertheless maintains a stubborn and persistent struggle as part of a social class" (p. 213). ?

Are we to conclude that crises are "ideological" phenomena, the alienated consequence of a creativity doomed to reification? This contradiction is indeed a recurrent one in Swingewood, so that we can discover similar dislocations in other parts of his text, such as:

> "It follows from this that the tendencies and laws which Marx enunciates in *Capital* are not to be taken as concrete predictions about the future for . . . they may be 'modified' by 'other circumstances'. For Marx, capitalism constituted a differentiated totality, the parts of which, including those elements comprising the 'superstructure', are bound together as a contradictory unity" (p. 48),

and

> "Clearly Marx does not hold a straightforward breakdown theory. Indeed, his emphasis on consciousness and the conservative role of ideology in society point emphatically towards *praxis* if the capitalist equilibrium is to be shattered" (p. 49).

In other words, Swingewood begins with the position that the laws and tendencies analysed by Marx succeed in defining a "contradictory unity", but one not intrinsically prone to breakdown; this then becomes an "equilibrium" which requires the divine intervention of "praxis" if the hope of socialism is to be rescued; but as we have already seen, Swingewood subsequently rejects the category of "equilibrium" in order to assert the increasingly catastrophic nature of capitalist crises, thereby sharply circumscribing the scope of class-conscious "praxis".

"Radical Sociology"

However, the amplitude of Swingewood's theoretical oscillations only fully emerges with his discussion of "radical sociology". Essentially the charge is made that "radical sociology" departs from Marxism in that it seeks through individual "praxis" for an utterly utopian solution to problems arising from the immensity of universal reification. With considerable exactitude, Swingewood comments:

> "A complete identification is . . . made between subject and object. There seems no way of falsifying propositions and one man's radicalism seems as good as the next. 'Radical' sociology is, in short, an ideology of disenchanted left-wing intellectuals for whom the proletariat is no longer the means of revolutionary social change" (p. 222).

In order to emphasise the distance between his own position and that of "radical sociology", Swingewood follows this with the comment that Marx's:

> "mature social theory is a revolutionary theory based on the objective laws of capitalist development, its internal contradictions and revolutionary class" (pp. 222-23).

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And just to drive home the message, he adds: "His [Marx's] work was pre-eminently scientific and objective" (p. 223).

From his reaction to this section of Swingewood's book we can see rather more clearly Hunt's approach to the problems it raises. It would be generally true to say that for Hunt reading B is either invisible or else completely recessive in relation to reading A. And it is precisely on the grounds of reading A that he bases his claim that the book is of some considerable importance. However, his attention is forcibly diverted to reading B by Swingewood's comments on "radical sociology"; and here, although the criticisms that are made are endorsed without discussion by Hunt as "perfectly valid" (p. 378), nevertheless the fact that Swingewood makes them is said to bespeak a "sectarian attitude". Indeed, in order to accommodate the subjective idealism of the "radical" sociologists Hunt goes so far as to say that "these are tendencies that should be assisted and encouraged" (p. 384), and this even though Swingewood's critique is "perfectly valid"!

In other words, not only does Hunt for the most part silence the more materialist reading of the book, but when it becomes too obtrusive for that he at once reacts negatively. Crippling contradictions rage unnoticed at the heart of Swingewood's text, but just at the point where they are largely overcome in the development of an accurate critique of the more obvious idealist incursions into Marxism, Swingewood is accused of sectarianism.

Hunt denies the possibility of a monopoly of Marxist truth, a position from which there can be no dissent. However, he appears in practice to infer from this the impropriety of combating or even criticising any views put forward as "Marxist", even the demonstrable idealism of certain self-styled radical positions. The reality is that the same fact which prohibits Marxism from degenerating into a closed dogmatic system—namely, that it constitutes a scientific activity involving investigation, discovery and conceptual development—also places it under a duty to identify and reject positions which are regressive in terms of its own history.

Socialist Democracy—Some Problems

Dennis Ogden

As John Gollan observes in his article—20 years overdue, but welcome nevertheless—we "seem to lack a worked-out theoretical treatment" of the relative functions of party and state. The Soviet state has been relegated to a subordinate role. The state-party relationship has been distorted, the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat vulgarised and perverted, thus opening the way for the concentration and abuse of power.

John Gollan dates this process from Lenin's death. In fact, its roots can be traced further back in the resolutions of successive party congresses. The encroachment of the party upon the functions of the state began during the years of civil war and foreign intervention. It was then seen as something to be resisted, a product of the situation, a temporary phenomenon. But with the civil war barely over, it became more widespread in practice and was legitimised in theory.

Party and State

The First Soviet Constitution (July 1918) had the aim of establishing "the dictatorship of the urban and rural proletariat and the poorest peasantry in the form of a powerful All-Russia Soviet Government".[1] Supreme authority was vested in an All-Russia Congress of Soviets and an All-Russia Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) which functioned in the intervals between Congresses and appointed the Soviet government—the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). The Constitution contained no reference to the Communist Party.[2]

The first post-revolutionary Party Programme adopted by the Eighth Congress (March 1919) saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "necessary condition" for the social revolution. It defined it as "the conquest by the proletariat of the political power which will enable it to suppress any re-

[1] *First Decrees of Soviet Power*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1970, p. 154.

[2] Reference to the Communist Party first appeared in the Third (1936) Constitution (Art. 126).

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sistance by the exploiters".[3] It declared that "proletarian or Soviet democracy has transformed the mass organisations of the classes oppressed by capitalism . . . into the permanent and sole foundation of the entire state apparatus".[4]

Eighth Congress

But the role of the Soviets in the centre declined in late 1918 and 1919. This was partly due to the civil war, which demanded centralisation and the concentration of authority. Another reason was that given by Lenin when he addressed the Eighth Party Congress: ". . . so far we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government . . . there is still the level of culture. . . . The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole . . . the section of the workers who are governing is inordinately, incredibly *small*."[5]

This same Congress sought to formulate the relationship between party and state. The Communist Party "strives especially to secure the passage of its programme and its complete leadership in the present-day state organisations, the Soviets". But "the functions of party collectives must in no circumstances be confused with those of state bodies such as the Soviets. Such a confusion would have fatal results, especially in military matters. The party must put its decisions through Soviet organisations *within the framework of the Soviet Constitution*. The party endeavours to *guide* the work of the Soviets, not to replace them."[6]

But the reorganisation of the party's central leadership bodies undertaken at this Congress further contributed to the erosion of the state's role and the accretion of power to the party's leadership. A five-member Political Bureau (Politbureau) was created to deal with "matters permitting no postponement". It was accountable to the 19-member Central Committee which met at least twice a month to discuss "all the most important political and organisational questions not requiring the most urgent decision". A five-member Organisation Bureau (Orgbureau) meeting at least three times a week and "guiding all the organisational work" of the party was set up, also accountable to the Central Committee. A Secretariat, similarly accountable, was set up, consisting of a "responsible secretary", a member of the Orgbureau, with five "technical secretaries".[7] The membership and terms of reference of the Orgbureau and Secretariat were further extended by the Ninth Congress (March-April 1920).[8]

At 10th and 11th Congresses

From the point of view of party-state relationships, the 10th Congress (March 1921), which initiated the New Economic Policy, discussed the role of the trade unions and adopted a decision on party unity prohibiting fractions, was noteworthy in two respects. Lenin noted that "this is the first congress that is meeting without any hostile troops . . . on the territory of the Soviet Republic".[9] A resolution on party development noted that, with the ending of the civil war, the situation had changed, and forms of party organisation must change accordingly. The preceding period had been one of inevitable "militarisation", with methods of work akin to "a system of battle orders". Now, in the new, changed situation, "working democracy" with the active participation of all members in the discussion of every issue was required. The practice of appointing party officials must cease, and the elective principle should be observed from top to bottom. The practice of the "assignment to bench and plough" on normal working conditions of officials who had served for a long time on party or government work should be resumed.[10] On the other hand, the manner in which the resolution on party unity was implemented in subsequent years contributed greatly to the growth of "monolithic" trends.

Concern at the way in which the state-party relationship was developing was voiced by Lenin at the 11th Congress (March 1922)—the last Party Congress he attended. "The relations between the party and the Soviet government bodies are not what they ought to be. . . ."[11]

While retaining "general leadership and guidance of the entire policy of the Soviet state", the party,

[3] *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh syezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, Moscow, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 39 (hereinafter *KPSS* . . .). The Programme stressed the need to explain that "deprivation of political rights and any restrictions on freedom were necessary exclusively as temporary measures. . . . As the objective possibility of the exploitation of man by man disappears, so also will the need for these temporary measures disappear, and the party will strive for their reduction and complete repeal" (p. 42).

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[5] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969, Vol. 29, p. 183. Italics in original (hereinafter *C.W.*).

[6] *KPSS* . . ., Vol. 2, pp. 76-77 (italics in original —D. O.).

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[9] *C.W.*, Vol. 32, p. 167.

[10] *KPSS* . . ., Vol. 2, pp. 207-12.

[11] *C.W.*, Vol. 33, pp. 307-8.

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said a resolution, must "draw a much clearer line of distinction between its current work and that of Soviet bodies, between its apparatus and that of the Soviets . . . the All-Russia Central Executive Committee must become a body dealing with fundamental issues of legislation. . . ".[12]

A resolution on the party's new tasks reaffirmed "with special force" the view expressed by the Eighth Congress. If the confusion of state and party functions would have had fatal consequences in military matters in 1919, "in 1922 such confusion would have utterly fatal results in the economic sphere".[13]

In April 1922 Stalin became General Secretary. Within eight months he had, in Lenin's words, "unlimited authority concentrated in his hands".[14] This was due to the continuing accretion of power to the party at the expense of the state, and also to the changing relationships between the party's leadership bodies. The Politbureau was becoming increasingly dependent upon the Secretariat, which, together with the Orgbureau and the department responsible for the allocation of personnel, was beginning to enjoy immense powers of patronage, both as regards "elective" party posts and senior governmental posts.[15]

The 11th Congress had also reinforced the powers of the party's control commissions. Created in September 1920 to "receive and examine all complaints",[16] they now, in the wake of the 10th Congress resolution on unity, had the "serious and important task" of waging the campaign against "disputes and groupings".[17] The Central Control Commission co-ordinated its work with the G.P.U., the state security agency, to which a party Control Commission investigator was attached.[18]

The significance of this concentration of power and patronage during the debates of the '20s needs no elaboration.

[12] *KPSS . . .*, Vol. 2, p. 315.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

[14] *C.W.*, Vol. 36, p. 594.

[15] In the 12 months prior to the 12th Party Congress (April 1923) 5,167 "responsible officials" were assigned in this way (*Dvenadtsaty syezd RKPb*, Moscow, 1968, p. 804). A speaker presenting a report to the Congress noted that as a result of an Orgbureau decision, records were also kept of "responsible officials" who were not party members. He commented that while this was "useful and necessary", it "represented a certain danger in the sense that the party apparatus may gradually take over work which should be done by our Soviet apparatus" (*ibid.*, p. 74).

[16] *KPSS . . .*, Vol. 2, p. 194

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

[18] *Dvenadtsaty syezd RKPb*, pp. 243-4.

Lenin's Position

Lenin during the last months of his active life (late 1922, early 1923) was profoundly aware that something was amiss with the structure of the Soviet state. It was not merely a question of bureaucracy. He spoke even of the possibility of a reorganisation of the Soviet Union which was only just coming into being as he dictated the words: "*we cannot be sure in advance that . . . we shall* not take a step backwards at our next Congress of Soviets, i.e., retain the union of Soviet socialist republics only for military and diplomatic affairs".[19]

It is, however, important to recognise the limitations of his analysis. At times he seems to combat bureaucracy by bureaucratic methods—by the setting up of new committees and commissions. At some points he urged a clear differentiation between state and party—but he at others advocated fusion. His theoretical legacy with respect to the problems of administering a complex, modern society is not of uniform value.

The 12th Party Congress (April 1923), which Lenin was unable to attend, and which came at the end of Stalin's first year of office as General Secretary, was significant in that it marked the legitimisation in a congress resolution of what had been happening in practice.

The "radical reorganisation and systematic improvement of the entire state apparatus" could now, said a resolution, be posed "as a priority task" following the "full completion" of the civil war.[20] The need to implement the resolutions of earlier Congresses regarding the "precise division of labour between party and Soviet organisations" was stressed.[21]

Relegation of the State

But this "priority task" could be completed "only during the course of a number of years and with the greatest caution and circumspection".[22] A warning was given against "too broad an interpretation" of the resolutions of earlier Congresses, which, it was said, "could create political dangers for the party". The Communist Party "can in no circumstances now limit itself only to general propaganda and agitation. *The dictatorship of the working class cannot be ensured otherwise than in the form of the dictatorship of its progressive*

[19] *C.W.*, Vol. 36, p. 610.

[20] *KPSS . . .*, Vol. 2, p. 407.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 405.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 407.

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advance guard, i.e. the Communist Party."[23]

The resolution went on to declare that "the counterposing of the Soviet state and the dictatorship of the party is now the main agitational weapon of all the enemies of our party and in their hands assumes a clearly counter-revolutionary character".[24]

Stalin himself voiced criticism of the "dictatorship of the party" formulation. But in practice, the state, which should be the main means by which the working people exert political influence and reshape society, and which should provide a reliable system of institutionalised checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power, was relegated to a subordinate role. Despite some changes since 1953, that is still essentially the position.

[23] *Ibid.,* p. 406 (italics mine—D. O.). A footnote describes the formulation regarding the "dictatorship of the party" as "mistaken" and "anti-Leninist", attributing it to Zinoviev. An earlier edition attributes it to an "oversight".

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 408.

Kenneth Brinson

Gollan's opening is distorted, historically and politically. Regrettably it comes from a man who in the past has significantly contributed to the international Communist and workers' movement. Rather than attempting an erudite refutation peppered with quotations I simply propose to reassert certain fundamental principles which I believe are being smothered in the British workers' movement, a process which Gollan's opening reflects.

Undoubtedly certain distortions of legality have occurred in the Soviet Union. No secret has been made of this; disclosure occurred at the CPSU 20th Congress in 1956. It is often underemphasised that the Soviet Party brought these abuses into the open, thus washing its dirty linen before the eyes of the world. This contrasts sharply with the Nixon clique's attempts to cover up the ramifications of Watergate to the very end. Invariably, under capitalism, public scandals of this order have to be prised open by forces opposing the established authority against that authority's resistance. There have been several lesser parallels in 20th-century British history.

From healthy criticism of these abuses (not least in the Soviet Union where a number of unjustly-treated citizens were reinstated in society), in recent years the pendulum has swung towards an extreme, beyond objectivity into the realms of speculation and distortion. Such distortion is increasingly used for anti-Communist and anti-democratic purposes. This has been especially marked in Western Europe where social-democracy is now the major political force in a number of countries. It has become fashionable in some quarters, including petty-bourgeois circles posing on the left, to levy continuous criticism against Stalin and against the Soviet Union in Stalin's time and since. Such unbridled anti-Sovietism and ostentatious refutation of "Stalinism" has become a mark of "political acceptability" in the West. It is significant that Gollan's opening received three columns on the back-cover of the *Financial Times.* Other Communist statements on issues of more immediate significance to the British working class do not receive such coverage.

Necessary Objectivity Lacking

Positive features of Soviet development under Stalin's leadership and of Stalin's personal contribution are seldom mentioned and (if they are not ignored or denied) have been designated a heresy by many claiming a position on the "left" in Britain. Gollan states: "Marxism requires the truth." Indeed so. Further, the truth requires objectivity and objectivity requires the viewing of a problem in all its aspects, positive and negative.

The reason is quite plain—the imperialist states correctly recognise the Soviet Union as the main power-base of socialism and anti-imperialism. Logically, imperialism's main ideological plank is anti-Sovietism. The ideologues of imperialism are especially delighted with criticisms of Soviet policy emanating from Communist sources. Therefore, British Communists have an internationalist duty to be unerringly objective in their treatment of these matters. It is important that we do not stray from principled positions in pursuit of easy and questionable popular acceptability. Gollan's opening lacks this necessary objectivity, it displays an over-anxious desire to identify with the acceptable "anti-Stalinist" lobby, a position which capitalism is only too willing to applaud and encourage. The vilest anti-democratic sources sound eloquent praise for what they deem "democratic sentiments" displayed by certain Communist parties. Strange that this always alludes to criticism of one or another aspect of Soviet policy!

Realities of the Soviet Struggle

Gollan displays little understanding of the day-to-day realities of the struggles of the Soviet people since 1917. Whilst British workers have

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known struggle and hardship it can not be argued that we have suffered rigours remotely approaching those suffered by our Soviet counterparts. From the ravages of counter-revolution, intervention and starvation, they moved to the struggle to consolidate and build. This was disrupted by invasion and war, millions of their population slaughtered and subjected to Nazi terror. The brief illusions of victory and peace were shattered by the hectoring ostracism of the West's Cold War trumpeted by some of the most vicious anti-democrats ever to walk the face of the Earth.

The entire period under Stalin's leadership was marked by class strife; the issue was by no means settled in 1917. It was not simply a matter of sanctions against anti-Communists; Communists were being assassinated, workers on collective farms were being murdered and terrorised by right-wing bands with whom reformist circles were collaborating. The history of these times is well recorded by Sholokhov and Belayev; the Soviet people know well the sabotage and terror of which their internal enemies are capable and human memories are not that short. Amidst such a turmoil of human and class emotions to look around for ethical purity is utopian. That some arbitrary tendencies manifested themselves is hardly surprising or that the repercussions of this bitter class fight for liberation echo to this day. It is easy to be smug from the isolation of Britain; it is for the much-maligned Soviet people to repair the damage done. Unobjective criticism from us does not assist them.

Anti-Semitism not Tolerated

Gollan's implied allegation that overt anti-Semitism is tolerated is unjust. No doubt there are remnants of this historically-conditioned racism, but the stand of Soviet law against racism is undisputed. Prosecutions for anti-Semitic acts have been documented in Soviet and Western presses. One reported arson against a synagogue received a 12-year severe régime sentence.

There have occurred angry, spontaneous reactions of citizens and militiamen to Zionist provocations at public functions. With the odious connotations of political Zionism, description of such reactions as anti-Semitic constitutes distortion. Zionists are well aware what socialist citizens think of their racist creed, that overt Zionist demonstrations evoke a response is hardly surprising (or worrying).

Much distorted Western propaganda concerns Soviet limitation of Jewish emigration to Israel. An aspect seldom debated is the implications of such emigration for the Palestinians. Israel is an imperialist, racist state; it has evicted millions of Palestinians from their homeland and enslaved thousands within its borders as racially-despised second-class citizens. Israel (with Western collusion) occupies large tracts of Arab land and adopts an intransigent position on returning this land. The Soviet Union justly supports the aspirations of the Palestinians and the Arab liberation struggle; is it reasonable or "progressive" to expect the Soviet Union to freely facilitate emigration of those (many imbued with Zionism) who wish to leave for Israel, there to share in the oppression of the Palestinians? This is especially relevant in the cases of young or highly-trained Soviet Jews who constitute a valuable addition to the Israeli war effort. Freedom of Jewish emigration militates against Palestinian freedom. British Communists cannot remain immune to this consideration. Gollan's opening overlooks the international aspect of class struggle in relation to this problem.

The Question of Dissent

Gollan criticises Soviet use of the security forces and legal system against political dissent. He calls for "political means" of handling dissent, but specifies few concrete proposals. He forgets that the historical experience of the Soviet people, their burned-in memories of the damage done by "dissenters" has conditioned their attitudes. He forgets that these attitudes *are* intensely *political*.

The labour camp system is much-maligned by bourgeois ideologues. These institutions are reserved for serious criminals and the most recalcitrant of dissenting political activists. Their emphasis is on reclamation through discipline, re-education and labour. The régime is clearly strict, but (from the limited information available) not brutal in the manner of United States penal institutions, some of which are notorious for maltreatment of prisoners (especially black prisoners). Further, in their attempts to reclaim and reintegrate in society these camps appear greatly superior to British prisons where genuine attempts to reintegrate are minimal and where the soul-destroying régime often perpetuates the "old lag" syndrome.

It is not true that Soviet dissidents are tried for their views. Dissidents face trial or expulsion for involvement in active, subversive agitations aimed against the Soviet state and socialism. This point has been made by the relevant Soviet authorities, but Western sources feign ignorance. Given the past losses inflicted on the Soviet people by subversive organisations of the right and some of what (in the West) is termed the "centre", these laws debarring anti-Soviet agitation are justly based and enjoy the support of the vast majority of the Soviet people. They serve to protect socialist freedoms from the subversive designs of a minority aligning themselves with imperialism which is viciously

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indifferent to human life when wealth and power are at stake!

Adoption of "liberal" images by some of these elements should fool no one; such political masks have disguised scoundrels for many a year (and not only in the Soviet Union).

Trials are held under peoples' justice far more open and democratic than our legal system where frequent bail denial, police intimidation of the confused and inarticulate and pressurised plea bargaining (affecting mainly working-class people) constitute a national scandal. No doubt there occur occasional abuses in Soviet law, but the built-in democratic safeguards of the Soviet system are designed to unearth them.

Popular Democracy in Practice

Popular democracy pervades all aspects of Soviet society. It is not perfect and is still developing. No doubt individual bureaucracy occasionally rears its head, but democracy and popular participation in trades unions, the mass political organisations, movements of women and youth, is impressive and inconceivable under capitalism. The thesis that Soviet people labour under a deadweight bureaucracy is threadbare.

Literature is not state-censored. Decisions to publish or not publish are taken by the Union of Soviet Writers, a democratic right of the collectively-organised authors to decide what is worthy. Falsehood, distortion and malicious campaigning are justly debarred. It is not the purpose of socialist organisations to provide a forum for the calculated ideas of unfreedom. To collectively debar the ideas of privilege and oppression and to pre-empt the philosophical and political channels of anti-socialism is to assert and defend socialist democracy. Soviet people rightly reject definitions of "socialism" urged on them by those who never had a socialist thought in their heads!

Gollan's opening implicitly accepts allegations of abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union, allegations refuted by Soviet psychiatrists and at least one visiting Western psychiatrist. How much unimpeachable evidence of abuse has come forward? British Communists should show less readiness to acknowledge these allegations as valid, based as they are on evidence from questionable sources. It is worth noting that political abuse of psychiatry has been alleged to occur in Western Europe, also based on unclear evidence.

Gollan's conclusions regarding the innocence of the mass of those tried in closed trials in the 1930s and 40s seem overstated. Some injustices were acknowledged in the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin period, but there are weighty testimonies which tend to counter Gollan's position and he makes no reference to these. Joseph E. Davies, leading US diplomat in the Soviet Union in the 1930s (and no lover of Communism), in his book *Mission to Moscow* explained his conviction that the majority of those tried at that time were guilty and enumerated points of evidence in support of this.

At the Expense of Principle

In conclusion I contend that the lack of objectivity in Gollan's opening stems from an opportunistic desire to cement an alliance with forces on the left of social-democracy (which carry a strong current of anti-Sovietism) at all costs; not on a principled basis but at the expense of principle and internationalist obligation. To achieve this end the viewpoint reflected in my contribution is being stigmatised as a "heresy" and bureaucratic, heavy-handed methods have been used in dealing with this viewpoint (I have personally been on the receiving end of such treatment). In this context I would simply state to Comrade Gollan that this approach is much the opposite of the "open political approach" he urges on the Soviet Party.

Further, this opportunist formulation holds within it grave dangers for the British workers' movement if applied at some future point of acute class crisis and conflict in Britain when the prospect of socialist power looms large. There is great emphasis on "plurality of political parties", "freedom of the media", "personal freedom" and related vague formulas. This underpins a fundamental and dangerous illusion about the determination of the bourgeoisie and its organised state apparatus to resist the transition to socialism and about the lengths to which they are prepared to go in order to sustain their power. Gollan's formulation seems far removed from Lenin's "dictatorship of the proletariat". The tragedy of Chile stares from the gravestones of Chilean socialists. I have no wish to see British workers suffer in a similar process of the shattering of Gollan's illusions.

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Mike Prior

I

Gollan's article is at least a beginning, but unfortunately it is little more than that.

The major defect in his analysis is the manner in which he separates Soviet society into strands which are considered as quite distinct even when there are obvious linkages between them.

Gollan suggests that the social and economic development of the Soviet Union has proceeded relatively smoothly since the era of collectivisation and rapid industrialisation. His summary is that: "The socialist system, with power in the hands of the working class, has a deeply humane purpose. It is not only economically superior, it leads to the abolition of exploitation, the widest satisfaction of human, economic, social and cultural needs." The basis for this socialist system was laid in 1917, but was decisively advanced by the Stalinist policies from 1929 onward. "Stalin's role and that of his supporters in routing the Trotskyist and right opposition was undoubtedly of great historical significance. . . . That the opposition line was defeated, the decisive social basis of the revolution was continued, a great socialist industry was created and collectivisation carried through, was . . . an historic achievement without which the victory in the Second World War would have been impossible. It has proved decisive for world development ever since."

These are major claims, quite enough to justify what may be vulgarly called the 'pimple on the bum' argument which suggests that criticising the Soviet Union is akin to looking for defects on the Venus de Milo.

So the questions must be asked: How is it that such a successful economic and social policy could be worked out alongside such a debased and undemocratic political system? And why was it that the man, who in 1930 was making so correct a stand against "error", could descend to such a state by 1938 as to believe Nazi-fabricated charges and order the slaughter of the leadership of the Soviet army?

A more analytic look at Russian history is necessary if we are to grasp the basic 'problems' of socialist democracy.

II

The 1917 revolution was really two revolutions, not just in the usual split between February and October, but on a fundamental class level. In these revolutions the proletariat seized state power and the peasantry seized the land. The two were linked by the same social process, the disintegration of Czarist rule under the pressure of the war, but they proceeded to a large extent independently of each other. It is doubtful whether the Bolsheviks in St. Petersburg had any clear idea of what was happening in the countryside; certainly the peasants had only the haziest notion of what was happening in St. Petersburg.

The Bolsheviks seized power by a brilliantly organised urban uprising; they held it because the peasants had achieved their ambitions and the Bolsheviks were prepared to leave them in possession of what they had gained. In the civil war the peasants were by and large supporters of the Bolsheviks, for the withering of the petty bourgeois supporters of land reform meant that to support the anti-Bolshevik forces meant the return of the landlords.

The price that the Bolsheviks paid for this support was the almost total turning over of the land to small-scale production with at best only 1 or 2 per cent of the land being retained for state farms or collectives; a figure that was a good deal less than they had hoped for.

Administrative Control of the Economy

By the 20s the Soviet leaders were locked into a fearful dilemma. If forcible requisition of grain was practised or low prices were paid, the peasants simply refused to grow the grain required; they burnt or hid what was surplus to their requirements and the towns went hungry. If high grain prices were fixed to stimulate production, then the grain came into the towns, but the kulaks prospered and grew in political strength whilst the workers suffered high food prices and tended to go back to the countryside.

The fundamental policy of isolating the kulak and gradually forming collectives failed. There was scarcely more acreage in collectives in 1928 than in 1922, whilst by 1927 it had become clear that, even with harvest levels back to prewar figures, the percentage of this marketed in the towns was drastically reduced.

This was the crucial point of change. Throughout the 20s, as Gollan describes, there had been a steady degeneration inside the CPSU which centred around the ability of Stalin to control by administrative order rather than political persuasion. But, by and large, the economic functioning of society had been altered only within fairly well-defined constraints of class democracy. And certainly there had been a great deal of debate as to the correct political policy to adopt in handling the economy. It was the extension of administrative control to envelope the whole economy which laid the basis *both* for the rapid expansion of

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industry *and* the mass repression. The two are quite inseparable. The former required a steady supply of food, a high rate of investment from resources supplied mainly by the agricultural sector, a concentration of effort on capital goods rather than consumption, a massive increase in industrial labour. In each case the instrument used to enforce these demands was administrative coercion and terror rather than political policy.

Negative Features

The positive achievements of the period have been described at length; the negative features have received less attention.

First in agriculture the social effects of collectivisation were devastating. No one knows for sure how many died or were deported to the camps, but it was probably somewhere between 1 and 5 millions. The rest of the peasantry, after a wave of piecemeal resistance and destruction of cattle and other livestock, remained as a dispossessed mass, cut off from virtually all democratic rights and from much of the social benefits enjoyed by town dwellers. And agriculture has remained as a major problem in the Soviet economy.

The introduction of large numbers of peasant workers into industrial labour with its novel work patterns meant that job turnover was very high and productivity very low. Deutscher has described the draconian labour laws that were brought in to control the former.[1] These ensured the final destruction of the trade unions as other than an arm of government control.

To raise productivity, a complex system of material incentives was set up, based not only on large wage differentials but upon an assortment of special shops, canteens, holiday centres, and so on, which were only accessible to the favoured. It is this system of 'perks' which has come to be the most characteristic feature of Soviet social distinction.

Another effect, more diffuse but perhaps most important, was the effects of a 'command' economy on personal initiative. In such an economy, people at all levels function by obeying directives from above. In the Stalinist period, questioning or altering instructions could lead to arrest or even death; nowadays it may lead to no more than displeasure, but there is little sign that there has been any significant reversal of the stifling of personal initiative and reluctance to take personal responsibility.

III

The basis of the Stalinist economy was extensive growth—that is the mobilisation of additional labour and raw material resources rather than the more efficient use of existing resources. As the rate of increase of industrial labour has slowed, and as new sources of raw materials have become more remote, the Soviet economy has found it very difficult to make the transition to intensive growth based upon the use of new technology. As a result Soviet growth rates have year by year dropped to levels which are no better than many capitalist economies.[2]

Even these growth rates have only been achieved by devoting a much higher percentage of national income to investment, as opposed to consumption, than is usual in capitalist countries, which have, in the postwar period managed a much more efficient usage of capital resources. Thus the USSR invests about as much in real terms as the USA from a national income about half the size, and achieves a growth rate which has been much the same as the USA over the last few years.

The basic weaknesses of the Soviet economy have been spelled out over many years by the Soviet leaders in speeches and by newspaper articles; they constantly refer to themes such as wasteful use of materials; poor and defective quality of manufactures; inefficient maintenance and repair; long delays in the completion of capital projects; insufficient application of new technology; poor labour discipline and drunkenness; huge stocks of raw materials and semi-finished products. All these it will be noted are the product of the factor discussed above—the deadening of personal initiatives and the failure to allow proper freedom in the economic *as well as* the political sphere.

At the Heart of the Problem

It is a fundamental paradox of Russian society that it produces more trained engineers and scientists than any other country in the world, yet in terms of technological advance the gap between Russia and the capitalist states is growing rather than decreasing.

As many people have noted, the Soviet problem lies not with a lack of trained people but with a system which inhibits risk or experiment—the exact reverse of what one would expect from a socialist system.

Now, of course, many comrades will say that

[1] *I Deutscher: Soviet Trade Unions*, p. 87 onwards.

[2] It is impossible in the allowed space to justify these assertions by proper statistical reference. They are not, however, made without such backing. One important, and in its day 'official', analysis of the difficulties of the Stalinist economy is contained in O. Sik, 'The Bureaucratic Economy', based on television lectures given in Prague in June, 1968.

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the USSR does not suffer the problems of recession, inflation and unemployment which plague capitalist economies. But repeating that slogan (which is in any case only half true) cannot obscure the fact that, averaged over the years, Japanese, German and even British workers have increased their standards by at least as much as the Russian workers since the war. And in the future, the increasing Soviet dependence on Western technology, paid for by raw material exports and foreign loans, is unlikely to help socialist advance.[3]

No, comrades, we delude ourselves if we think that these 'problems of socialist democracy' are confined to some superficial problems about free speech. They go to the heart.

IV

One final point.

Gollan notes that men like Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov have recently taken lines which are naïve or reactionary. So what does he expect? Take men whose original dissent was founded mainly on humanistic revolt against oppression, isolate them, prevent any real debate, stop or retard proper information reaching them (let alone feed them on largactil syrup or insulin) and what happens? The one retreats to the Russian mysticism typical of his background, the other to the technocratic elitism typical of his.

But there is another group who managed a much more organised critique of Stalinist bureaucracy, and who obtained the support of a nation—the Czech Communists, hounded out of political life after 1968. One of them recently wrote to the present Czech leaders:

> "This horrifying political experience [of Stalinism] is one factor that obliges us never again to bargain with our consciousness and our honour.
>
> "You know perfectly well who I have in mind. I mean all those who in 1968 fought for a programme of social reforms intended to strengthen and improve socialism, and who subsequently did not abandon this programme. We have always been socialists. We are concerned with the interests and the future of our society, rather than with positions of power and personal privileges. You have hounded half a million of us out of the Party, and you have been persecuting us together with non-communists in everyday life. But you have not broken us. . . .
>
> ". . . There are many of us and we represent the democratic alternative of socialism. We are ready for a dialogue at any time, and at any time we can present our alternative programme, which will be better worked out than it was in 1968. You have forced us to work as navvies but you do not have the force to dissect our brains and stop us thinking."[4]

And we, who make our judgments from easier circumstances, can take a marker for our own courage in facing the truth.

[3] In 1975, the Comecon countries are believed to have borrowed $2.5 billion in Eurodollars alone, whilst Soviet foreign interest payments now exceed 20 per cent of its total foreign currency exports.

[4] K. Kaplan writing to V. Bilak; published in *The Times*, 7/1/76.

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